A WORLD OF GREEN HILLS

JONATHAN DANIELS

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A WORLD OF GREEN HILLS

OBSERVATIONS OF NATURE
AND HUMAN NATURE
IN THE BLUE
RIDGE

BY

BRADFORD TORREY

He joyes in groves, and makes himselfe full blythe
With sundrie flowers, in wilde fieldes gatherèd.
SPENSER.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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NORTH CAROLINA

A WORLD OF GREEN HILLS

A DAY'S DRIVE IN THREE STATES

In a day and a night I had come from early May to middle June; from a world of bare boughs to a forest clad in all the verdure of summer. Such a shine as the big, lusty leaves of the black-jack oaks had put on! I could have raised a shout. In the day when "all the trees of the field shall clap their hands," may I be somewhere in the black-jack's neighborhood. Hour after hour we sped along, out of North Carolina into South Carolina: now through miles and miles of forest; now past a lonely cabin, with roses before the door, white honeysuckle covering the fence, and acres of sunny ploughed land on either side. Here a river ran between close green hills, and there the hills parted and disclosed the revolving horizon set with blue mountains. Then, at a

little past noon, the porter appeared with his brush. "Seneca is next," he said. I alighted in lonely state, was escorted to the hotel, did my best with a luncheon, — gleaned bit by bit out of an outlying wilderness of small dishes, — and at the earliest moment took my seat in a "buggy" beside a colored boy who was to drive me to Walhalla, nine miles away. At that point I was to be met, the next morning, by the carriage that should convey me into the mountains.

Seneca is a smallish place, but my colored driver was no countryman. "Boston?" Yes, yes; he had lived there once himself. He had been a Pullman porter. "But you don't get to learn anything in that way," he added, a little disdainfully; "just running back and forth." He had "waited" in Florida, and had been to Jamaica and I forget where else, though he was only twenty-three years old. He liked to go round and see the world. "Married?" No; a man who did n't live anywhere had no business with a wife and children. Still he was not oblivious to feminine charms, as became evident when we passed a pair of dusky beauties. "Oh, I will *look* at 'em," he said,

with the tone of a man who had broken his full share of hearts. He was one of the fortunates who are born with their eyes open. I quizzed him about birds. Yes, he had noticed them; he had been hunting a good deal. This and the other were named, — partridges, pheasants, doves, meadow larks, chewinks, chats, night-hawks. Yes, he knew them; if not by the names I called them by, then from my descriptions, to which in most cases he proceeded to add some convincing touches of his own. The chat he did not recognize under that title, but when I tried to hit off some of the bird's odd characteristics he began to laugh. "Oh yes, sir, I know *that* fellow." As for whip-poorwills, the whole country was full of them. "You can't hear your ears for 'em at night," he declared. "No, sir, you can't hear your ears." With all the rest he was a "silverite." At the end of the drive I handed him a dollar bill, one of Uncle Sam's handsomest, as it happened, fresh from the bank. He looked at it dubiously, fumbled it a moment, and passed it back. "Say, boss," he said, "can't you give me a silver dollar? It might rain." In a land of

thunder-showers and thin clothing, he meant to say, what we need is an insoluble currency. That, as such things go, was a pretty substantial argument for "free silver," or so it seemed to me; and I spoke of it, accordingly, a week or two afterward, to an advocate of the "white metal." He was impressed by it just as I had been, and begged me to make use of the argument when I got back to Boston; as I now do, with all cheerfulness, feeling that, whatever a man's own opinions may be, he is bound to keep an ear open for the best that can be put forward against them. At the same time, I am constrained to add that I have never been quite sure whether my driver's plea was anything better than a polite subterfuge. It would have been nothing wonderful, surely, if he had questioned the genuineness of a kind of money to which he was so little accustomed. Small bills — "ones and twos," as we familiarly call them — have but a limited circulation at the South, as all travelers must have noticed. On my present trip, for instance, I bought a railway ticket at a rural station, and proffered the agent a two-dollar bill. He gave it a glance

of surprise, looked at me, — "Ah, a Northern man," so I read his thoughts, — and incontinently slipped the bill into his pocket. A rarity like that was not for the cash drawer and the daily course of business. I might almost as well have given him a two-dollar gold coin; like the pious heroine of a Sunday-school story I was reading the other day, who dropped into the contribution-box a "fifty-dollar gold piece"!

The rain, concerning whose destructive power my colored boy had been so apprehensive, very soon set in, and left me nothing to do but to make the best of an afternoon upon the hotel piazza, with its outlook up and down the village street, and its gossip and politics. As to the latter I played the part of listener, in spite of sundry courteous attempts to draw me out. Tillman and the silver question were discussed with a welcome coolness of spirit, while I looked at an occasional passing horseman (it is the one advantage of poor roads that they keep an entire community in the saddle), or admired the evolutions of the chimney swifts and the martins. Roses and honeysuckles would have made the dooryards beautiful, had that

result fallen within the bounds of possibility, and a chinaberry-tree, full of purple blossoms, was not only a thing of beauty in itself, but to me was also a sweet remembrancer of Florida.

My only other recollection of the afternoon seems almost too trivial for record. Yet who knows? What has interested one man may perchance do as much for another. In the midst of the talk, a man with an axe came along, and said to the proprietor of the hotel, "Have you got a grinding-rock here?" "Yes, round behind the house," was the answer. "Grinding-rock"! — that was a new name for my old back-breaking acquaintance of the haying season, and good as it was new. I adopted it on the instant. With its rasping, gritty sound, it seemed a plain case of onomatopoetic justice. No more "grindstone" for me, if I live a thousand years.

I mentioned the subject some days afterward to a citizen of Highlands. "Oh yes," he answered, "they always say 'rock;' not only 'grinding-rock,' but 'whet-rock.'" Then he added something that pleased me still more. He had just been to the county seat as a member of the grand jury, and

among the cases before him and his colleagues was one of alleged assault by "rocking," that word being used in the legal document, whatever its name, in which the complaint was set forth. This point was of special interest to me, I say. In my boyhood, which, so far as I know, was not exceptionally belligerent, it was an every-day occurrence to "fire rocks" at an enemy, or "rock him;" whereas an editorial brother, himself of New England birth, with whom it is often my privilege to compare notes, affirms that he never heard such expressions, though he has sometimes met with them — and presumably corrected them — in manuscript stories. It was no small satisfaction to find this bit of my own Massachusetts — Old Colony — dialect still surviving, and in common use, in the Carolinas.

Walhalla itself, with an elevation of a thousand feet, and mountains visible not far off, lays some not unnatural claims to a "climate," and in a small way is a health resort, I believe, in spite of its rather sinister name, both summer and winter. To me, indeed, it seemed a place to stop at rather than to stay in; but, as the reader knows, I

saw it only from the main street on a muddy afternoon, and was likely to do it but foul-weather justice. Even its merits as a necessary lodging station were lightly appreciated, till on my return I made my exit from the mountains on the other side of them, and put up for the night in another village, and especially at another hotel. Compared with that, Walhalla was, in deed as in name, a kind of heavenly place. Is it well, or not, that what is worse makes us half contented with what is simply bad? I was more than ready, at any rate, when a Walhalla boy brought me word the next morning, "Your carriage has done come." [1]

The sky was fair, and shortly after seven

[1] "Do come" and "did come" are proper enough; why not "done come"? And in point of fact, this common Southern use of "done" with the past participle has its warrant in at least two lines of Chaucer: in *The Knightes Tale* (1055): —

"Hath Theseus doon wrought in noble wise,"

and in *The Tale of the Man of Lawe* (171): —

"Thise marchants han doon fraught her shippes newe."

If a ship is "done loaded," why may not a carriage have "done come"? Idiom is long-lived. As Lowell said of the Yankee vernacular, so doubtless may we say of the Carolinian, that it "often has antiquity and very respectable literary authority on its side."

o'clock we were on the road, the driver and his one passenger, in a heavy three-seated mountain wagon, locally known as a "hack," drawn by two horses. Our destination was said to be thirty-two miles distant, — so much I knew; but the figures had given me little idea of the length of the journey. It was an agreeable surprise, also, when the driver informed me that we were not only going from South Carolina to North Carolina, but on the way were to spend some hours in Georgia, the mountainous north-eastern corner of that State being wedged in between the two Carolinas. In short, to accomplish our ascent of twenty-eight hundred feet we were out for a day's ride in three States and over four mountains, — an exhilarating prospect in that perfect May weather.

My recollections of the day run together, as it were, till the route, as memory tries to picture it forth, turns all to one hopeless blur: an interminable alternation of ups and downs, largely over shaded forest roads, but with occasional sunny stretches, especially, as it seemed, whenever I essayed to take the cramp out of my legs by a half-hour's climb

on foot. A turn or two in the road, and we had left the village behind us, and then, almost before I knew it, we were among the hills: now aloft on the shoulder of one of them, with innumerable mountains crowding the horizon; now shut in some narrow, winding valley, our "distance and horizon gone," with a bird singing from the bushes, and likely enough a stream playing hide-and-seek behind a tangle of rhododendron and laurel. Wild as the country was, we never traveled many miles without coming in sight of a building of some kind: a rude mill, it might be, or more probably a cabin. Once at least, in a very wilderness of a place, we passed a schoolhouse; as to which it puzzled me to guess, first where the pupils came from, and then how they got light to read by, unless, happy children, they took their books out of doors and studied their lessons under the trees, and so went to school with the birds.

Little by little — very little — we continued to ascend, gaining something more than we lost as the road seesawed from valley to hill, and from hill to valley. So it finally appeared, I mean to say; the changes in the vegetation serving eventually to establish a

point which for hours together had been mainly an article of faith. As to another point, the four mountains over which our course was supposed to run, that remains a question of faith to this day. There might have been two, or thrice two, for aught I could tell. The road avoided summits, as a matter of course, and, if I can make myself understood, we were so lost in the hills that we could not see them. When we had left one and had come to another, I knew it only as the driver told me. So far as any sense of upward progress was concerned, we might almost as well have been marking time.

"What mountain are we on now?" This was a stock question with me.

"Stumphouse."

"And why is it called Stumphouse?"

"Because a good many years ago a man lived here in a hollow stump."

"And in what State are we?"

"South Car'lina."

"But are n't we near the North Carolina line?"

"No, sir; we have to go through Georgy first."

Till now I had been quite unaware of

what I may call the interstate character of our day's ride.

"Indeed! And how soon shall we get into Georgia?"

"When we cross the Chattoogy River."

"The Chattooga? What is that? A branch of the Savannah?"

"Yes, sir."

"How do you spell it?"

"I do not know, sir."

My driver had certain verbal niceties of his own; he never said "don't." As for his inability to spell "Chattooga," or "Chatuga," he was little to be blamed for that. The atlas-makers are no better off.

By and by we forded a sizeable stream.

"Now, then, we are crossing into Georgia?" I began again.

"No, sir; this is not the Chattoogy, but one of its prongs."

Finally, at high noon, we dropped into a hot and breezeless valley, with the Chattooga running through it in the sun. Here was a farm. Mr. —— lived here, and kept a kind of half-way house for travelers. But we would not stop at it, the driver said, if it was all the same to me. There was another

house just across the river. He had given the people notice of our coming, on his way down the day before, and the woman would have dinner ready for me. Both houses were very nice places to eat at, he added for my encouragement. So it happened that I breakfasted in South Carolina, dined in Georgia, and supped in North Carolina. The dinner, to which I sat down alone, was bountiful after its kind. If the table did not "groan," it must have been because it was ignorant of a table's duty; and if I did not make a feast, let the failure be laid to the idiosyncrasy of a man who once cut short his stay at one of the most inviting places in all Virginia because he was pampered monotonously for five consecutive meals with nothing but fried ham, fried eggs, and soda biscuits. "It is never too late to give up our prejudices," says Thoreau, in one of his lofty moods. Wisdom uttered in that tone is not to be disputed; but if it is never "too late," I for one have sometimes found it too early. My bill of fare here in Georgia was by no means confined to the three Southern staples just now enumerated (let so much be said in simple justice), but they held the place of

honor, as a matter of course, and for the rest — well, there is a kind of variety that is only another kind of sameness. "An excellent dinner," said a facetious fellow-traveler of mine on a similar occasion, as, knife and fork in hand, he hovered doubtfully over the table, and, like Emerson's snowflake, "seemed nowhere to alight," — "a most excellent dinner; but then, you see, it is nothing but ham and eggs with variations." If this sounds like grumbling, it is only against a "system," as we say in these days, not against a person. My generous hostess had spared no pains, and from any point of view had given me far more than my money's worth; stinting herself only when it came to setting a price upon her bounty. That unavoidable business she approached, in response to the usual overtures on my part, with all manner of delicate indirections, holding back the decisive word till the very last moment, as if her tongue could not bring itself to utter a figure so extortionate. The truth was, she said, she had made nothing by giving dinners the year previous, and so felt obliged to charge five cents more the present season![1]

[1] If I seem to have said too much about the vulgar

The noon hour brought a sudden change in the day's programme. All the forenoon I had been asking questions, presuming upon my double right as a traveler and a Yankee; now I was to take my turn in the witness-box. My landlady's brother sat on the veranda mending a fishing-tackle, and we had hardly passed the time of day before it became apparent that he possessed one of nature's best intellectual gifts, an appetite for knowledge. With admirable civility, yet with no waste of time or breath, he went about his work, and long before dinner was announced I had given him my name, my residence (my age, perhaps, but here recollection becomes hazy), my occupation, the

question of something to eat, let it be my apology that for a Northern traveler in the rural South the food question is nothing less than the health question. A few years ago, two Boston ornithologists, who had undertaken an extensive tour among the North Carolina mountains, returned before the time. Sickness had driven them home, it turned out; and when they came to publish the result of their investigations, they finished their narrative by saying, "Few Northern digestions could accomplish the feat of properly nourishing a man on native fare." On my present trip, a resident physician assured me that the native mountaineers, living mostly out of doors and in one of the best of climates, are almost without exception dyspeptics.

object of my present journey and its probable duration, some account of my previous visits South, my notion of New England weather, my impressions of Washington, especially of the height of the Washington monument as compared with other similar structures (a question of peculiar moment to him, for some reason now past recall), and Heaven knows what else; while on a thousand or two of other topics I had confessed ignorance. I had never been to Chautauqua; that was perhaps my examiner's most serious disappointment. He was at present engaged on a Chautauquan course of reading, as it appeared, — the best course of reading that he had ever seen, he was inclined to think. Here again he had me playing second fiddle, or rather no fiddle at all.

His was a wholesome catholicity of mind, but it pleased me to notice that he too had felt the touch of the modern spirit, and was something of a specialist. Geography, or perhaps I should say climatology, seemed to lie uppermost in his thoughts. Once, I remember, he brought out a ponderous atlas of the world, a book of really astonishing proportions when the size of the house was

taken into account, though it may not have been absolutely necessary for him to bring it out of doors in order to open it. On the subject of comparative climatology, be it said without reserve, it did not take him long to come to the end of my resources. It is possible, of course, that his own concern about it was but temporary, — the result of his before-mentioned course of reading. There is no better — nor better understood — rule for conversation than to choose the subject of the book you happen to have had last in hand. Two to one the other man will know less about it than you do. Then you are in clover. But should it turn out that he is at home where you have but recently peeped in at the window, and so is bound to have you at a disadvantage, you have only to be beforehand with him by acknowledging with becoming modesty that you really know nothing about the matter, but happen to have just been looking over with some interest Mr. So-and-So's recent book. In other words, you may pass for a special student or a discursive reader, honorable characters both of them, according as the way opens.

I am not saying that my noonday acquain-

tance had practiced any such stratagem. His attitude throughout was that of a learner; nor did he set himself to shine even in that humble capacity, as one may easily do (and there are few safer methods) in this day of multifarious discovery, when the ability to ask intelligent questions has become of itself a badge of scholarship. His inquiries followed one another with perfect naturalness and simplicity; he simply wanted to know. As for the more strictly personal among them, they were only such as the most conventional of us instinctively feel like asking. "As soon as a stranger is introduced into any company," says Emerson, "one of the first questions which all wish to have answered is, 'How does that man get his living?'" There was no thought of taking offense. On the contrary, it was a pleasure to be angled for by so true an artist. If any newspaper should be in want of an "interviewer," — a remote contingency so far as any newspaper that I know anything about is concerned, — I could recommend a likely hand. A candidate for the presidency might balk him, but nobody else. My own conversation with him is still an agreeable memory; a man's mind

is like a well, all the better for being once in a while pumped dry. And yet, while I speak of him in this tone of sincere appreciation, it must be acknowledged that in one respect he did me an ill turn. He robbed me of an illusion. The Yankee is second where I had supposed him an undisputed first.

Though we were at the half-way house, and in fact had made more than half of our day's journey, the valley of the Chattooga at this point lay so warmly in the sun that the aspect of things remained decidedly southern. Roses and snowballs were in bloom in the dooryard, and as I came out from dinner a blue-gray gnatcatcher, the only one seen on my entire trip, was complaining from a persimmon-tree beside the gate. My attention to it, and to sundry other birds of the smaller sorts, — a blue golden-winged warbler, for example, — was matter of surprise to the men of the house, both of whom were now on the veranda. My seeker after knowledge, indeed, asked me plainly, but not without a word of apology, what object I had in view in such studies; in short, — when I stumbled a bit in my explanation, — whether there was "any money in them." In that form

the question presented less difficulty, and in my turn I asked him and his brother-in-law how often they were accustomed to see ravens thereabout. Their reply was little to the comfort of an enthusiast who had come a thousand miles, more or less, with ravens in his eye. Neither of them had seen one in the last five years. Something had happened to the birds, they could not say what. Formerly it was nothing uncommon to notice one or two flying over. Alas, this was not the first time it had been borne in upon me that, ornithologically, my portion was among the belated.

I have said nothing about it hitherto, but I had not driven five or six hours through strange woods and into the midst of strange hills without an ear open for bird notes. Even the rumbling of the heavy wagon and the uneasy creaking of the harness could not drown such music altogether, and once in a while, as I have said, I spelled myself on foot. At short intervals, too, when we came to some promising spot, — a swampy thicket, perhaps, or a patch of evergreens, — I called a halt to listen; the driver making no objection, and the horses less than none. The

voices, to my regret rather than to my surprise, were every one familiar, and the single unexpected thing about it all was the dearth of northern species. The date was May 6, and the woods might properly enough have been alive with homeward-bound migrants; but the only bird that I could positively rank under that head was a Swainson thrush, — a free-hearted singer, whose cheery White Mountain tune I never hear at the South without an inward refreshment. From the evergreens, none too common, and mostly too far from the road, came the voices of a pine warbler and one or two black-throated greens; and once, as we skirted a bushy hillside, I caught the sliding ditty of a prairie warbler. Here, too, I think it was that I heard the distinctive, loquacious call of a summer tanager, — four happy chances, as but for them, and the single gnatcatcher by the half way house gate, my vacation bird list would have been shorter by five species.

After all, the principal ornithological event of the forenoon was, not the singing of the Swainson thrush, but the discovery of a humming-bird's nest. This happened on the side of Stumphouse Mountain. I had

taken a short cut by myself, and had come out of the woods into the road again some distance ahead of the wagon, when suddenly I heard the buzz and squeak of a hummer, and, glancing upward, put my eye instantly upon the nest, which might have been two thirds done from its appearance, and then upon its owner, whose reiterated squeakings, I have no doubt, expressed her annoyance at my intrusion. In truth, both owners were present, and in that lay the exceptional interest of the story.

Some years ago I had proved, as I thought, that the male ruby-throat habitually takes no part in the hatching and rearing of its young, and, for that matter, is never to be seen about the nest in the five or six weeks during which that most laborious and nerve-trying work is going on. As to why this should be I could only confess ignorance; and subsequent observations, both by myself and by others,[1] while confirming the fact of the male's absence, had done nothing to bring to light the reason for it. Is the female herself responsible

[1] See especially an article by Mrs. Olive Thorne Miller in *The Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1896.

for such a state of things? I should hate to believe, as I have heard it maintained, that female birds in general cherish little or no real affection for their mates, regarding them simply as necessities of the hour; but it is certain that widows among them waste no time in mourning, and it appears to me likely enough, if I am to say what I think, that the lady hummer, a fussy and capable body (we all know the human type), having her nest done and the eggs laid, prefers her mate's room to his company, and gives him his walking ticket.

So much for a bit of half-serious speculation. The interest of the nest found here on Stumphouse Mountain lay, as I have said, in the fact that it was unfinished, and the male owner of it — if he is to be called an owner — was still present. Whether he was actually assisting in the construction of the family house, I am unable to tell. For the few minutes that I remained the female alone entered it, doing something or other to the wall or rim, and then flying away. With so long a journey before us there was no tarrying for further investigations, glad as I should have been to see the ruby-throat

for once conducting himself with something like Christian propriety. For to-day, at all events, he was neither a deserter nor an exile.

We rested for an hour or more at the half-way house, and then resumed our journey: the morning story over again, — upward and downward and roundabout, with woods and hills everywhere, and two mountains still to put behind us. We should be in Highlands before dark, the driver said; but one contingency had been left out of his calculation. When we had been under way an hour, or some such matter, he began to worry about one of the horses. My own eyes had been occupied elsewhere, but now it was plain enough, my attention having been called to it, that "Doc" was leaving his mate to do the work. And Doc was never known to play the shirk, the driver said, with a jealousy for his favorite's reputation pleasant to see and honorable to both parties. The poor fellow must be sick. "Did n't he eat his dinner?" I asked. "Yes; there was no sign of anything wrong at that time." Then it could be no very killing matter, I said to myself; a touch of

laziness, probably; who could blame him? — and I continued to enjoy the sights and sounds of the forest. But my seatmate, better experienced and more charitable, was not to be misled. Little by little his anxiety increased, till he could do nothing but talk about it (so it happened that we crossed the North Carolina line, and I was none the wiser); and before long it became evident, even to me, that whatever ailed the horse, sickness, laziness, discouragement, or exhaustion, he must be carefully humored, or we should find ourselves stranded for the night on a lonesome mountain road. Slower and slower we went, — both men on foot, of course, up all the ascents, — and worse and worse grew Doc's behavior. I was sorry for him, and sorrier still for the driver, who was thinking not only of his horse and his passenger, but of himself and his own standing with the owner of the team. He was sure it was none of his fault, he kept protesting; nothing of the kind had ever happened to him before. Finally, seeing him so miserably depressed (for the time being every misfortune is as bad as it looks), so quite at the end of his wit, and almost at the end of his

courage, I said, "Why not take advice at the next house we come to? Two heads are better than one." That was a word in season. To take advice would be a kind of division of responsibility. It is what doctors do when the patient is dying on their hands. The man brightened at once.

A mile or two more of halting and painful progress, then, and we approached a clearing, on the farther side of which two men were busy with a plough. The driver hailed one of them by name, and made known our difficulty. Would n't he please come to the road and see if he could make out what was the matter? He responded in the most neighborly spirit (he would have been a queer farmer, neighborly or not, not to feel interested in a question about a horse); but after looking into the animal's mouth, and disclaiming any special right to speak in such a case, he could only say that he saw no sign of anything worse than fatigue. Had n't the horse been worked hard lately? Yes, the driver answered, he had been in the harness pretty steadily for some time past. At this I put in my oar. Could n't another horse be borrowed somewhere, and the tired

one left to rest? — a suggestion, I need hardly say, that squinted hard toward the horse in sight before us across the field. The farmer approved of the idea; only where was the horse to come from? Mountain farmers, as I was to learn afterward, — and a strange state of things it seemed to a pilgrim from Yankee land, — are mostly too poor to support a horse, or even a mule. The man would let us have his, of course, but it was a young thing that had never been hitched up. "But I tell you," he broke out, after a minute's reflection. "You know So-and-So, don't you? He has a pair of mules. Perhaps you could get one of them." "Good!" said I, and we drove on a mile or two farther, — and by this time it *was* driving, — till we came to a cross-road, the only one that I recall on the whole day's route, though there must have been others, I suppose. The owner of the mules — whose exceptional opulence should have kept his name remembered — lived down that road a piece, the driver said. If I would stay by the wagon, he would go down there, and be back as quickly as possible.

He was gone half an hour or more, while

the horses browsed upon the bushes (if a good appetite signified anything, Doc was not yet on his way to the buzzards), and I, after listening awhile to the masterly improvisations of a brown thrasher, went spying about to see what birds might be hiding in the underbrush. The hobbyist, say what you please about him, is a lucky fellow. All sorts of untoward accidents bring grist to his mill; and so it was this time. I heard a sparrow's *tseep*, and soon called into sight two or three white-throats, — ordinary birds enough, but of value here as being the only ones found on the whole journey. I should have missed them infallibly but for Doc's misadventure.

The driver returned at last, and with him came a mountain farmer, — another good neighbor, I was glad to see, — leading a mule, which was quickly put into Doc's harness. But what to do with Doc? "Leave him," said I. "Lead him at the tail of the wagon," said the farmer; and the latter advice prevailed. And very good advice it seemed till we came to the first steepish piece of road. Then the horse began to hold back. "Look at him!" exclaimed the

driver in despairing tones; and all our tribulations were begun over again.

From this point there was only one way of getting on, and that at a snail's pace and with continual interruptions. The passenger took the reins, and the driver walked behind with his whip, and so, using as much kindness as might be, forced the unwilling horse to follow. Even that cruel resource threatened before long to fail us; for it began to look as if the unsteady creature would drop in his tracks. There it was, as I now suspect, that he played his best card. "You must leave him at the next house, if there is another," I said. "Yes, there is another," the driver answered, "and only one." We came to it presently, — a cabin far below us in a deep, wood-encircled valley, out of which rose pleasant evening sounds of a banjo and singing. The driver lifted his voice, and a woman appeared upon the piazza. The man of the house was not at home, she said; but the driver took down the Virginia fence, and with much patient coaxing and pulling got the horse down the long, steep slope and into a shed. Then, leaving word for him to be fed and cared for, he climbed back to the

road, and, freed at last from our incumbrance, we quickened our pace.

By this time it was growing dark. Bird songs had ceased, and flowers had long been invisible. But indeed, for the greater part of the afternoon, we had been so taken up with working our passage that I had found small opportunity for natural history comment. I recall a lovely rose-acacia shrub, an endless display of pink azalea, — set off here and there with the flat snowy clusters of the dogwood, — thickets fringed with drooping, white, sickly sweet Leucothoë racemes (which at the time I mistook for some kind of Andromeda), the shouts of two pileated woodpeckers, — always remarkable, — a hooded warbler's song out of a rhododendron thicket, and the sight of two or three rough-winged swallows. These last are worth mentioning, because in connection with them there came out the astonishing fact that the driver did not know what I meant by swallows. Apparently he had never heard the word, — which may help readers to understand what a scarcity of these airy birds there is in all that Alleghanian country. I should almost as soon have

expected to find a man who had never heard of sparrows!

It was after eight o'clock when we turned a sharp corner in the road and saw the lights of the village shining through the forest ahead of us. In fifteen minutes more I was at supper. I had come a long way by faith, — faith in a guidebook star; and my faith had not been vain.

IN QUEST OF RAVENS

"Every pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardor of the pursuer." — KEATS.

WHILE M. Sylvestre Bonnard, Member of the Institute, was in Sicily prosecuting his memorable search for the Alexandrian manuscript of the Golden Legend, he fell in unexpectedly with his old acquaintances, M. and Mme. Trépof, collectors of match-boxes. Their specialty, as may be supposed, was not exactly to M. Bonnard's liking. Being a scholar and an antiquary, he would rather have seen their affections bestowed upon something more strictly in the line of the fine arts, — upon antique marbles, perhaps, or painted vases; but after all, he said to himself, it made no very great difference. A collector is a collector; and, besides, Mme. Trépof always spoke of their pursuit (she and her husband were traveling round the world in furtherance of it) with a mixture of enthusiasm and irony that made the whole business truly delightful.

There we have the shrewd collector's secret. Whatever the objects of his choice, — postage-stamps, first editions, butterflies, or match-boxes, — they become for the time being the only objects worthy of a man's desire ; but in talking about them, as of course he cannot altogether avoid doing, he keeps in mind the old caution about the pearls and the swine, and veils his seriousness under a happy lightness of speech. This is the better course for all concerned ; and something like this is the course I mean to adopt in narrating my raven-hunt amid the North Carolina mountains, in May, 1896. The work was absorbing enough in the doing, but at this distance, and out of consideration for the scholarly reader, — who may feel about ravens as M. Bonnard felt about match-boxes, — I hope to be able to treat it with a becoming degree of disinterestedness.

My collecting, be it said in parenthesis, was in one respect quite unlike M. Bonnard's and Mme. Trépof's. It was concerned, not with the objects themselves, but with the sight of them. I wanted, not cured bird-skins in a cabinet, but bits of first-hand knowledge in the memory and the notebook.

Here at Highlands, this little hamlet perched far up in a mountain wilderness, ravens were common, — so I had read ; and as I purposed remaining in the place for two or three weeks, I should no doubt see much of them, and so be able not only to "check the name," thus adding the species to my set of the *Corvidæ*, but to acquire some real familiarity with the bird's voice and ways. Such was my dream ; but certainty began to fade into uncertainty from the day I drove into the mountains.

One of my first village calls, after a day's ramble in the country round about, was upon the apothecary, who sat sunning himself on the stoop in front of his shop, — a cheerful example of how idyllic a life "tending store" may become under favorable conditions. To begin with, as was natural, not to say obligatory, between a newcomer and an old resident, the altitude and climate of the place were discussed. Then, as soon as I could do so with politeness, I asked about ravens.

"Ravens?" said the doctor. "Ravens?" Surely the inflection was not encouraging. There *were* no ravens, so far as he knew.

"But the books say they are common here."

"Well, I am perfectly acquainted with the bird, and I have never seen one in Highlands in all my twelve years."

This might have seemed to end the matter, once for all; but as I walked away I remembered how often birds had proved to be common where old residents had never seen them, and I said to myself that the present would be only another repetition of the familiar story. There *must* be ravens here. Mr. —— and Mr. —— could not have been mistaken.

Let that be as it might, this was my third day in the mountains, — the long ride from Walhalla counting for one, — and when I returned to the village, at noon, my first glimpse of a raven was yet to be had. However, a wide-awake farmer assured me that, as he expressed it, something must be the matter with Dr. ——'s eyes. *He* had seen ravens many a time; in fact he had seen one within two days. Of course he had. The affair was turning out just as I had foreseen. It is a poor naturalist who has not learned to beware of negative testimony. The apothecary might sit on his stoop and shake his head; before many days I would shake a black wing in his face.

That afternoon I took another road, and though I found no ravens I brought back a lively expectation. I had stopped beside a pond, and was pulling down a small halesia-tree to break off a branch of its snowy bells, when a horseman rode up. We spoke to each other (it is one advantage of out-of-the-way places that they encourage human intercourse, as poverty helps people to be generous), and in answer to my inquiry he told me that the tree I was holding down was a "box elder." The road was the Hamburg road, or the Shortoff road, — one name being for a town, the other for a mountain, — and the body of water was Stewart's Pond. Then I came to the point. Did he often see ravens in this country? He answered promptly in the affirmative; and when I told him of my want of success and of Dr.——'s twelve-year failure, he assured me that if I would come out to Turtlepond, where he lived, I could see them easily enough. He saw them often, and just now they were particularly noisy; he thought they must be teaching their young to fly.

How far was it to Turtlepond? I asked. "Seven or eight miles." And the road?

Could he tell me how to get there? Oh, yes; and he began. But I was soon quite lost. He knew the way too well, and I gave over trying to follow him, saying to myself that I would procure directions, when the time came, from some one in the village. The man was very neighborly and kind, invited me to get up behind him and ride, gave me his name, answered all my questions, and rode away. Here, then, were ravens with something like certainty and well within reach ("ra-vĕns," my new acquaintance had been careful to say, with no slurring of the second vowel), and, Dr.—— to the contrary notwithstanding, I would yet see them.

The next morning, with a luncheon in my pocket and a minute itinerary in my note-book, I set out for Turtlepond. Important things must be attended to promptly. "You will be lucky if you find it," said the man who had laid out my route, by way of a god-speed; and I half believed him. He did not add, what I knew was on his tongue, "You will be luckier still if you find a raven;" as to that, also, he was welcome to his opinion. Ravens or no ravens, I meant to enjoy myself. What could a man want better than

a long, unhurried day in those romantic mountain roads, with a bird singing from every bush, and new and lovely flowers inviting his hand at every turn? With fair weather and in a fair country, walking is its own reward.

To put the town behind me was the work of a few minutes. After that my way ran through the woods, although for the first half of the distance, at least, there was never more than a mile or two without a clearing and a house. This part of the road grew familiar to me afterward, I traveled it so often; and now, as I take it once more in my mind, I can see it in all its windings. Here, as the land begins to decline from the plateau, or mountain shoulder, on which the village nestles, stands a line of towering conical hemlocks, — a hundred and fifty feet tall, at a moderate guess. Out of them came the nasal, high-pitched, highly characteristic *ank*, *ank*, *ank* of my first Canadian nuthatch, — my first one in North Carolina, I mean. That, by the bye, was on this very trip to Turtlepond. I had been on the watch for him, and put him into my bird list with peculiar satisfaction. He was like a fellow

Yankee, as was also the brown creeper that dwelt near by. This same row of hemlocks — beside a brook, as Southern hemlocks always are, with a thicket of laurel and rhododendron underneath — was also one of the haunts of the olive-sided flycatcher, another Northerner, who chooses the loftiest perch he can find from which to deliver his wild *quit-quequeeo.* Should this Carolinian representative of a boreal species ever be promoted to the dignity of sub-specific rank, as has happened to some of his neighbors, I should bid for the honor of naming him, — the hemlock flycatcher.

By the time I reached this point, on a sultry morning, I was commonly ready for a breathing-spell, and by good luck here was a most convenient log, on which I used to sit, listening to the bird chorus, and waylaying any socially disposed mountaineer who might chance to come along on his way to the town; for Highlands, whatever an outsider may think of it, is in its own measure and degree a veritable metropolis.[1] The only man who ever failed to halt in response to

[1] All things go by comparison. "I always lived in the country till I came here," said my driver to me one day.

my greeting was a very canonical-looking parson. He was traveling up to Zion in a "buggy," and not unlikely was meditating his next Sunday's sermon.

If the religious condition of a community is to be estimated by the number of its meeting-houses, let me say in passing, then Highlands ought to be a very suburb of the New Jerusalem. Its population cannot be more than three or four hundred, but its churches are legion. "Yes," said a sprightly young lady, to whom the subject was mentioned, "if there were only one or two more, we might all have one apiece." Baptists, Methodists (of different sorts, — species and subspecies), Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Adventists, Unitarians, — all the sects seemed to be provided for, though I am not sure about the Catholics and the Swedenborgians. It is queer how conscientiously particular, and almost private, the worship of God is made. The Almighty must be a great lover of mint, anise, and cummin, one would say. I was reminded again and again of that sweet old Scripture: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

This digression, though suggested by the recollection of my serious-faced clergyman, is not to be taken as reflecting in any wise upon him or upon his calling. He was trying to do his duty, I have no question. If he felt obliged to have a pulpit and a uniform of his own, it was not that he differed from other people, but that other people differed from him. May his work prosper, and his days be long! He was traveling in a buggy, as I have said. Had he been on foot, no doubt he might have been readier to stop a minute to chat with an inquisitive stranger, — as ready, perhaps, as a more venerable pilgrim who happened along a few minutes later, and who not only stopped, but sat down, and, so to speak, paid me a visit: a little man, bent with his seventy-three years (he told me his age almost at once), who had come ten miles on foot that morning. In one hand he carried a live turkey, — with its legs tied, of course, — and in the other a chicken. Poor things, they were making their last journey. It was a "very hot day," the old man thought. His cotton shirt was flung wide open for coolness, and as he mopped his face, having put down his bur-

dens and taken off his hat, he talked in a cheerful, honest voice, most agreeable to listen to. Life was still a pleasant experience to him, as it seemed. I doubt whether he had ever tired of it for a day. He would sell the turkey and the chicken, buy a little tobacco and perhaps one or two other necessaries, and then trudge the ten miles home again. It is a great thing to have a market for one's produce, and a greater thing to be contented with one's lot.

Not far beyond this favorite resting-place — tempting even in the retrospect, as the reader perceives — is a house with a good-sized clearing, through which meanders a trout-stream, to the endless comfort of one of the younger boys of the family. I saw him angling there, one day, with shining success. What a good time he was having! He could hardly bait the hook fast enough. I leaned over the fence and watched him out of pure sympathy (he did not see me, I think, though there was nothing in the world between us — except the fish), and afterward I mentioned the circumstance to his father. "Oh, he is a great fisherman," was the proud response. For a boy that *is* a

boy a trout-brook is better than all the toy-shops. The good man and his wife (New York State people, who had moved here twelve years before) treated me most hospitably when I came to know them, but on this first morning, having far to go, I went by without calling, pausing only to note the *chebec* of a least flycatcher, which seemed to be at home in their orchard trees. Its name is still Number 60 in my North Carolina list.

Another bend in the road, and I came within sight of the first of two mills. These had figured at considerable length in my chart of directions, and near them, as I now remember, I fell into some uncertainty as to how this chart was to be interpreted. I turned aside, therefore, to inquire of the second miller; but before I could reach him a blue yellow-backed warbler began singing from a treetop; and as he was my first specimen here, I must out with my opera-glass and find him. The miller surveyed my proceedings with unashamed curiosity, but he answered my questions, none the less, and for still another stage I kept on with the comfortable assurance that I was headed for Turtlepond.

If I failed to arrive there, it should not be for want of using my tongue. From the time I left Highlands I had inquired my way of every man I met. For one thing, I relish natural country talk; and if there is to be conversation, it must somehow be opened. I kept in mind, too, the skepticism of my Highlands informant, and by unhappy experience I had learned how easy it is, in cases of this kind, to go astray through some misunderstanding of question or answer.

So I sauntered along, with frequent interruptions, of course (that was part of the game), — here for a bird, there for a flower, a tree, or a bit of landscape. I recall especially great numbers of the tiny yellow lady's-slipper and beds of the white-flowered clintonia — the latter a novelty to me — just coming into bloom. Then, by and by, the road began a long, sidelong ascent of a mountain; but at the last moment, when I seemed to have left human habitations behind me for good, I saw across the narrow valley through the forest — the branches at this height being still in the bud — two men at work in a ploughed field. Here was one more opportunity to assure myself against

contingencies, and with a loud "hullo" I gained their attention. Was this the road to Turtlepond? I shouted. Yes, they shouted back (a man who could not lift up his voice would be poorly off in that country); I was to keep on and on as far as the schoolhouse, just beyond which I must be sure to turn to the right. Very good, said I to myself, here is something definite; and again I faced the mountain road.

That was a master stroke of precaution. But for it I might have walked till night, and should never have found myself at Turtlepond. I passed one more house, it is true, but there was no one visible about it, and when at last I reached the log schoolhouse, standing all by itself deep in the woods, it was locked and empty, and the "road to the right" was so obscure, so utterly unlike a road, that only for my last man's emphatic warning (how I blessed him for his good sense!) I should have passed it without a suspicion that it was or ever had been a thoroughfare. As it was, I looked at it and wondered. Could that be my course? There was no sign that horse or wheel had turned that corner for an in-

definite period. Still, my instructions were explicit. This was certainly the schoolhouse, and at the schoolhouse I was to turn to the right. Lest I should be interpreting a preposition too strictly, nevertheless, I kept on for a piece in the way I had been traveling. No, there was no other cross-road, and I came back to the schoolhouse, rested awhile under a big tree, and then took the blind trail. Happily, it very soon became more distinct, more evidently a road in use; and being now on a downward grade, I jogged along in good spirits.

It was drawing near noon, and unless my jaunt was to measure more than eight miles I must be somewhere near the end of it. The mountain forest was especially inviting here, with a brook now and then and a profusion of ground flowers, beside the laurel and the azaleas; but I must not linger, I said to myself, as I might be obliged to spend an hour or two at Turtlepond. It was hardly to be assumed that the ravens would be waiting for me, to greet me on the instant. Meanwhile, a pileated woodpecker set up a lusty shout just in advance, and in another moment went dashing off among the

trees, still shouting as he flew. He was no rarity in these parts, but it did me good to see his flaming crest and the flash of his white wing-spots. Then, when I had gone a little farther and could already discern the open valley, a kingfisher rattled and showed himself. He was the first of his kind, and went down straightway as Number 62. Perhaps Number 63 would be the raven!

Well, I emerged from the forest, the road turning rather sharply at the last and making down the valley with a brook on its left hand; and here I pretty soon approached a house. The two opposite doors were open (mosquitoes are unknown in this happy country), and inside, looking out of the back door in the direction of the brook, stood a woman and a brood of children. They were talking pretty loudly, as people may who live so far from human neighbors, and a hound stood silent behind them. I drew near, but they did not hear me. Then, rather than startle them rudely with a strange voice, I touched the fence-rail with my umbrella. Instantly the hound turned and began baying, and the woman, bidding him be quiet, came to the front door and

answered my good-morning. Could she tell me where Zeb McKinney lived? I inquired. Yes, it was the next house down the road, "about a quarter." Hereabouts, as I knew, a "quarter" means a quarter of a mile. In Yankee land it means twenty-five cents. The character of a people may be judged in part by the ellipses of their daily speech, — the things that are taken for granted by every one as present in the minds of others.

I believe I did not raise the question of ravens at this first house. For the instant it was enough to know that I had arrived at Turtlepond. But my eye was open and my ear alert. And surely this was a place for ravens and every wild thing: a narrow valley, tightly shut in, with nothing in sight but the crowding walls and a patch of sky. Aloft in the distance, in the direction of Hickory Gap (so I heard it called afterward, and wished that all place-names were equally euphonious), some large bird, hawk or eagle, was sailing out of sight. What a groveling creature is man, in the comparison! Along the brookside grew splendid halesia-trees, full of white bells, and a more splendid crab-apple tree, — one of the glo-

ries of America, — just now a perfect cloud of pink buds and blooms and tender green leaves. Here sang catbirds, thrashers, wood thrushes, robins, rose-breasted grosbeaks, a blue golden-winged warbler, and I forget what else. I had not traveled so far, half disabled as I was, to listen to birds of their quality. And the ravens? Well, at that moment they must have an engagement elsewhere. Perhaps they were still instructing their young in the art of volitation.

And now, having walked "about a quarter," I was at Zeb McKinney's. There was no need to inquire if he were at home. Through the open door I could see that the only occupants of the house were two women: one young, one very old and stiff. The latter, as was meet, came to speak to the stranger. No, Mr. McKinney was not at home; he had gone down to the sawmill. Ravens? Yes, they saw them once in a while, but she did not remember noticing any for some time back. The spring was just below the house; I should find a gourd to drink from.

I drank from the spring, pondered the woman's "once in a while," took a look

about me, and then retraced my steps, having in mind a comfortable nooning-place, out of sight of the houses, where I would eat my luncheon, and observe the ravens at my leisure as they crossed from one mountain to another above my head. For all the unexpectedness of the old woman's dubious phrase, I was not discouraged. Why should I be? Mr. Burroughs did not find the English nightingale all at once, nor did M. Tartarin kill a lion on his first day in the Algerian desert; and if these men had exercised patience, so could I.

At the right spot, therefore, where the shade fell upon a handy stump, I took my seat. First a line or two in my notebook, and then I would dispose of my luncheon. At that instant, however, two boys came down the road; and when I spoke to them, they waited for no more explicit invitation, but planted themselves on the ground, one on each side of me. If I asked them a question, they answered it; if I kept silence, they sat and looked at me. For aught that appeared, they meant to spend the afternoon thus engaged. Pleasant as

popularity is, its manifestations were just now a trouble. The ravens might fly over at any moment, and it was important that I should be undisturbed, — to say nothing of my dinner. I remembered the saying of Poor Richard, — "Love your neighbor, but don't pull down your hedge;" and at last, seeing that something must be done, I rose, moved a few rods, and then, dropping suddenly upon the grass, said, "Good-by." The boys took the hint, and ten minutes later I saw them beside the brook, trying their luck with the fish. The quality of selfishness had proved itself twice blest, as happens oftener than we think, it may be, in this "unintelligible world."

This part of the story need not be prolonged. The reader has already foreseen that my luncheon was finished without interruption. No raven's wing darkened the air. I lingered till the case began to seem hopeless. Then I loitered as slowly as possible up the valley, and at last took the ascending road through the mountain woods toward the log schoolhouse. By this time there were signs of rain, but with a three-hour jaunt before me it was useless

to hurry. So at the schoolhouse corner I rested again, — partly to enjoy the sight of Rabun Bald, a noble Georgia peak, which showed grandly from this point, — and then, all at once, thinking of nothing but the landscape, I heard a far-away cry, hoarse, loud, utterly strange, utterly unlike a crow's, and yet unmistakably coracious! That surely was a raven's voice. It could be nothing else. If I were out of the woods, where I could look about me! The bird, whatever it was, was evidently on the wing; the sound was now here, now there; but alas, it was receding. Fainter and fainter it became at each repetition, and then all was silent, till a heavy clap of thunder and a sudden blackness recalled me to myself, and I resumed the march homeward. Soon it rained. Then came a general pother of the elements, — wind, hail, lightning and thunder. Not far beyond me, as I now called to mind, there was a house, the only one I had seen on the mountain. I hastened forward, therefore, and took shelter on the piazza. A dog was cowering inside, too badly frightened to resent my intrusion or to bid me welcome.

And there we stayed till the clouds broke. Then, refreshing myself with big hailstones, which lay white in the grass, I took the road again for the long diagonal descent to the valley.

I was well fagged by the time I reached Highlands; but I had been to Turtlepond, and in my memory were some confused recollections of a few distant notes, probably a bird's, and possibly a raven's. To that complexion had the matter already come. It is marvelous how quickly certainty loses its color when once the breath of doubt touches it.

Two days afterward, finding myself not yet acclimated, I joined a company who were making a day's wagon-trip to Whiteside, the highest peak in the immediate vicinity of Highlands; a real mountain, said to be five thousand feet in height, but looking considerably lower to my eye, its surroundings being all so elevated, and the southern latitude, as I suppose, giving to it a more richly wooded, and consequently less rugged and alpine appearance than belongs to New England mountains of a corresponding rank. On the southerly side it breaks

off into a huge perpendicular light-colored cliff, said to be eighteen hundred feet in depth, from which it derives its name and much of its local distinction. Above this cliff rises its knob of a summit, with the sight of which I had grown familiar as one of the principal points in the landscape from the hotel veranda.

The wagon carried us by a roundabout course to the base of this rocky knob, and there the majority of the party remained, while two ladies and myself clambered up a steep pitch to the summit, to take the prospect and to feel that we had been there, — and perhaps to see a raven; for Whiteside had from the beginning been held up to me as one of that bird's particular resorts. "Wait till you go to Whiteside," I had been told again and again.

What had looked like a pyramidal rock turned out to be the end of a long ridge, over which we marched in Indian file for a mile or more, picking flowers (the nodding *Trillium stylosum*, especially, of which each new specimen seemed pinker and prettier than the last) and admiring the landscape,

— a boundless woodland panorama, with clearings and houses in Whiteside valley, and innumerable hazy mountains rising one beyond another in every direction. The world of new leafage below us, now darkened by cloud shadows, now shining in the sun, was beautiful far beyond any skill of mine to picture it.

We were still walking and quietly enjoying — my fellow tourists being, fortunately, of the non-exclamatory type — when the silence was broken by loud screams. "Ravens!" I thought, — for when the mind is full it is liable to spill over at any sudden jar, — and, dropping my umbrella, I sprang to the edge of the cliff. The bird was only a hawk, soaring and screaming, too far away to be made out; a duck-hawk, perhaps, but certainly not a raven. "How you frightened me!" said one of the ladies. "I thought you were going to throw yourself over the precipice." My hobby-horse amused her, — as it did me also, — but she was herself too sound an enthusiast to be really unsympathetic. A New Jersey grandmother, she made nothing of a thirteen-mile tramp, a thorough drenching,

and a pedestrian's blister, when rare flowers were in question, and the next morning would be off again before breakfast, scouring the country for new trophies. Like Mme. Trépof, she would have gone to Sweden in search of a match-box, had the notion taken her. As for ravens, she had already seen one, only a few days before my arrival. It flew directly over the hotel, and she recognized it at once, not as a raven, to be sure, but as "the blackest crow she had ever seen." A man who happened to be doing some carpenter's work about the house heard her exclamation, and told her what it was, and by good luck he was to-day our driver. It was wonderful how much encouragement I received in my amusing pursuit. If only there were fewer stories and more ravens! I was ready to say.

Yet if I said so, it was only in a fit of impatience. In point of fact, I received with thankfulness every such bit of evidence that Dr. ——'s gloomy prognostications were ill founded. On the very morning after this expedition to Whiteside, for example, I was on my way to the summit of Satulah, — an easy jaunt, and a capital observatory,

— when I met a young man carrying a gun, and proposed to him the inevitable inquiry. Oh yes, he saw ravens pretty often; he had seen some within a month, he thought. They never flew over without calling out; which, as I interpreted it, might mean only that when they kept silence he failed to notice them. Here was more proof of the birds' presence; but the words "within a month" kept down any tendency to undue exhilaration.

That noon, at the hotel, I had an interesting ornithological conference with two residents of the town, both of them already well informed as to the nature of my crotchet. For a beginning, one of them told me that he had seen a raven that very forenoon, — and as usual it was "flying over." Then the talk somehow turned upon the whippoorwill, of which I had thus far found no trace hereabout, and they agreed that it was not uncommon at certain seasons. It was often called the bullbat, they added. They had seen it, both of them, I think, flying far up in the air in broad daylight, and crying *whippoorwill!* "Good!" said I. "I would rather have seen that than all the ravens in

North Carolina." Here was a really novel addition to the familiar legend about the identity of the whippoorwill and the nighthawk, — a legend whose distribution is perhaps almost as wide as that of the birds themselves.

But wonders were not to stop here. One of the men, the one who had that forenoon seen a raven, proceeded to inform me that catbirds passed the winter in the mud, in a state of hibernation. William —— had dug them up, and they had come to and flown away. He himself had never seen this, but he knew, as everybody else did, that catbirds disappeared in the autumn, there was no telling how or when, and reappeared in the spring in a manner equally mysterious. I hinted some incredulity, to his great surprise, intimating for one thing that it was well known that catbirds migrated farther south; whereupon he appealed to his companion. "Would n't you believe it, if William —— told you he had seen it?" he asked; and there was a shout of laughter from the bystanders when the second man, after a minute's reflection, answered bluntly, "No."

It would be too long a story to set down all the answers I received from the many persons whom I questioned here and there in my daily peregrinations. One man was sorry he had not heard of me sooner. A cow had been killed by lightning somewhere on the mountains, a week or two before. That would have been my opportunity. Ravens are sure to be on hand at such a time. But it was too late now, as they never touch flesh after it has begun to spoil. Another man, a German, living some miles out of the village, said, "Well, in my country we call them ravens, but here they call them crows." They were a nuisance; he had to kill them. He knew smaller black birds, in flocks, but no larger ones. He and the apothecary — who now and then laughed good-humoredly at my continued failure, as I stopped to pass the time of day with him, or to ask him about the way to some waterfall — were, as well as I remember, the only witnesses for the negative; so that the question was no longer as to the presence of the birds, but as to the degree of their commonness and the probability of my seeing them. It would be too much to say that the whole town was

excited over the matter, but at least my few fellow boarders at the hotel either felt or simulated a pretty constant interest. "Well," one or another of them would say, as I dragged my weary steps up the hill to the door, at the end of a day's outing, "well, have you seen any ravĕns yet?"

One day there appeared at the dinner-table a bright, rosy-faced, clear-eyed, wholesome-looking boy of nine or ten years, and the gentleman who had brought him in as his guest presently introduced him to me, with the remark that perhaps "Bob" could give me information upon my favorite topic. Bob smiled bashfully, and I began my examination. Yes, he said, he had seen ravens. How often, should he say? Why, almost every day. When did he see them last? Yesterday. How many were there? One. It was flying over. Did it call? Yes, they always did. How much bigger than a crow was it? Not much, but the voice was very different. This last was a model answer, — not at all the answer of a dishonest witness, or of an honest witness ambitious to make out a story. It was impossible to doubt him (his father and his older brother confirmed

his testimony afterward), and yet I had been out of doors almost constantly for more than two weeks, and so far had not obtained the first glimpse of a large, wide-ranging, high-flying bird which this boy — who lived a few miles out of the village, it is true — saw nearly every day. Verily, as the unsuccessful man's text has it (and a comfortable text it is), "the race is not to the swift, . . . nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

I speak unadvisedly. I *had* seen ravens; I had seen them here at Highlands. But it was in a dream of the night. There were two, and they were "flying over," — yes, and calling as they flew. One of them was partly white, an albinistic peculiarity at which I do not remember to have felt the least surprise. But indeed, if I may trust my own experience, nothing surprises us in dreamland. There, as in fairyland, everything is natural. Perhaps the same will be true in a world after this.

Meantime, if my eyes were holden from some things, I saw many others as I traveled hither and thither, now to a mountain top, now down one of the roads into the warm

lower country, now to some far-away woodland waterfall. The days were all too short and all too few. Like a sensible man, to whom years had brought the philosophic mind, I had more than one string to my bow, and toward the end of my three weeks the very thought of ravens had mostly ceased to trouble me. Then, on my last day in the village, I met a barefooted boy near the hotel. "Howdy?" said I. "Howdy?" he answered; and then he asked, "Did you git to see your ravĕns?" Who is this, I thought, and how does he know me? For I am not used to being famous. But I answered No, I had seen no ravens. How did he know I wanted to see any? "I saw you at Turtlepond," he said. He was out there with his cousin, Cling Cabe. With that it all came back to me. He was one of the boys who had paid me such flattering noonday attentions, and of whom I had taken so shabby a leave. I was glad to see him again. But he was not yet done with his story. Probably he had carried the burden of it for the last fortnight. "Two ravens flew over just after you left," he said. Was he sure they were ravens? Yes, his uncle

Zeb[1] saw them, and said they were. Well, it was plainer and plainer that I had mistaken my game. I must leave it for younger eyes to see ravens, — in the flesh, at least. "Your old men shall dream dreams," said the prophet.

It was May 27 when, after an early breakfast, I left Highlands in a big mountain wagon, bound for Boston by the way of Dillsboro and Asheville. I had come into the mountains from the south, and was going out in a northerly direction. The road was not highly recommended; it would be a rough, all-day drive, but it would take me through a new piece of country; and as for the jolting, I fancied that by this time I had become hardened to all that the steepest and stoniest of roads could inflict upon a passenger. On that point, I may as well confess, though it does not concern the present story, I was insufficiently informed.

It had been agreed that I should take my

[1] The great "war governor" and senator of North Carolina was born among the mountains of the State; and from what I heard, he seems to have left his name

"to be found, like a wild flower,
All over his dear country,"

as truly as Wallace ever did in Scotland.

own time, making the trip as natural-historical as I pleased. "It fares better with sentiments not to be in a hurry with them," says Sterne, and the same is true of sciences and other pleasures. Again and again I ordered the horses stopped as we came to some likely piece of cover, but little or nothing resulted. There were singers in plenty, but no new voices. After all, I said to myself, one does not study ornithology to any great advantage from a wagon-seat. Yet I remember one lesson — an old one rehearsed — that the morning brought me.

Soon after getting out of the village we passed Stewart's Pond. This had been one of my most frequent resorts. A considerable part of several half-days had been idled away beside it, and more than once I had commented upon the singular fact that its shores, birdy as they were, harbored no water thrushes, while in several similar places I had heard them singing for more than a fortnight. There was something really mysterious about it, I was inclined to think. The place seemed made for them, unless, perhaps, the damming of the stream had rendered the current too sluggish to suit

their taste. Now, however, as we drove past, and just as I was bidding the place good-by, a water thrush struck up his simple, lazily emphatic tune. "Here I am, stranger," he might have been saying. Had he been there all the time? I did not know. One's investigations are never complete, even in the most limited area.

We had not gone many miles farther before we took what was for me a new road, which turned out presently to be like all the others: a road running mostly through the forest, uphill and downhill by turns, with here and there, at long distances, a solitary cabin, unpainted, perhaps unwindowed, yet pretty certainly with a patch of sweet-william and other old-fashioned flowers in the "front yard." The rudest one of all, in the very lonesomest of clearings, had before the door a magnificent eglantine bush that would have made the fortune of any Northern gardener. The mountain side might be all aflame with azalea and laurel, but the woman's heart must have a bit of garden, something planted and tended, to make the cabin more like a home.

For some hours we had been traveling

thus, and were now come to an open place in the town of Hamburg, so the driver told me. Here, all at once, I nudged him with a quick command to stop. "There it is!" I cried, as I whipped out my opera-glass. "There 's a raven!" "Yes," said the driver, "that 's the bird." He was flying from us in a diagonal course, making toward a hill or mountain, — at a comfortable distance, in the best of lights, and most admirably disposed to show us his dimensions; but he was silent and in tremendous haste.

"Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he."

If you would only *say* something! I thought. But he did not "call out," perhaps because he was not "flying over." I held the glass on him till he passed out of sight, — a really good look, as time counts under such circumstances. Yes, at the last moment I had seen a raven! Would the driver, when he got back to Highlands to-morrow evening, have the goodness so to inform Dr. —— for his comfort?

Another thing I had accomplished: I had supplied three male Hamburgers with abundant material for a week's gossip; for even

in my excitement I had been aware that we had halted almost directly in front of a house, — the only one for some miles, I think, — in the yard of which three men were lounging. I looked at the bird, and the men looked at me. It gave me pleasure afterward to think what a story it must have made. "Yes, sir, it 's gospel truth: he pulled out a spy-glass and sat there looking at a raven. I reckon he never see one before."

I speak of excitement, but it was a wonder to me how temperate my emotions were, and how quickly they subsided. Within a half-mile our progress was blocked by a large oak-tree, which the wind had twisted partly off and thrown squarely across the road. The driver had brought no axe along, and was obliged to go back to the house for help, leaving me to care for the team. Straight before me loomed the Balsam Mountains, a dozen peaks, gloriously high and mountainous; not too far away, yet far enough to be blue, with white clouds veiling their lower slopes and so lifting the tops skyward. I looked at them and looked at them, and between the looks I put the raven into my notebook.

For the day it kept its place unquestioned. Then, long before I reached Massachusetts, I punctuated the entry with a question mark. The bird had been silent; its apparent size might have been an illusion; and my assurance of the moment, absolute though it was, would not bear the test of time and cold blood.

Here ended my raven-hunt. I had enjoyed it, and would gladly have made it longer, — in that respect it had been successful; but the "collection" I was to have made, my little store of "first-hand knowledge," had fared but poorly. As far as ravens were concerned, I was bringing home a lean bag, — a brace of interrogation points.

A MOUNTAIN POND

STEWART'S POND, on the Hamburg road a mile or so from the village of Highlands, served me, a visiting bird-gazer, more than one good turn: selfishly considered, it was something to be thankful for; but I never passed it, for all that, without feeling that it was a defacement of the landscape. The Cullasajah River is here only four or five miles from its source, near the summit of Whiteside Mountain; and already a land-owner, taking advantage of a level space and what passes among men as a legal title, has dammed it (the reader may spell the word as he chooses — "dammed" or "damned," it is all one to a mountain stream) for uses of his own. The water backs up between a wooded hill on one side and a rounded grassy knoll on the other, narrows where the road crosses it by a rude bridge, and immediately broadens again, as best it can, against the base of a steeper,

forest-covered hill just beyond. The shapelessness of the pond and its romantic surroundings will in the course of years give it beauty, but for the present everything is unpleasantly new. The tall old trees and the ancient rhododendron bushes, which have been drowned by the brook they meant only to drink from, are too recently dead. Nature must have time to trim the ragged edges of man's work and fit it into her own plan. And she will do it, though it may take her longer than to absorb the man himself.

When I came in sight of the pond for the first time, in the midst of my second day's explorations, my first thought, it must be confessed, was not of its beauty or want of beauty, but of sandpipers, and in a minute more I was leaning over the fence to sweep the water-line with my opera-glass. Yes, there they were, five or six in number, one here, another there; solitary sandpipers, so called with only a moderate degree of appropriateness, breaking their long northward journey beside this mountain lake, which might have been made for their express convenience. I was glad to see them. Without

being rare, they make themselves uncommon enough to be always interesting; and they have, besides, one really famous trait, — the extraordinary secrecy of their breeding operations. Well known as they are, and wide as is their distribution, their eggs, so far as I am aware, are still unrepresented in scientific collections except by a single specimen found almost twenty years ago in Vermont; a "record," as we say in these days, of which *Totanus solitarius* may rightfully be proud.

About another part of the pond, on this same afternoon (May 8), were two sandpipers of a more ordinary sort: spotted sandpipers, familiar objects, we may fairly say, the whole country over. Few American schoolboys but have laughed at their absurd teetering motions. In this respect the solitary sandpiper is better behaved. It does not teeter — it *bobs;* standing still, as if in deep thought, and then dipping forward quickly (a fanciful observer might take the movement for an affirmative gesticulation, an involuntary "Yes, yes, now I have it!") and instantly recovering itself, exactly in the manner of a plover. This is partly what

Mr. Chapman means, I suppose, when he speaks of the solitary sandpiper's superior quietness and dignity; two fine attributes, which may have much to do with their possessor's almost unparalleled success in eluding the researches of oölogical collectors. Nervousness and loquacity are poor hands at preserving a secret.

Although my first brief visit to Stewart's Pond made three additions to my local bird-list (the third being a pair of brown creepers), I did not go that way again for almost a fortnight. Then (May 21) my feet were barely on the bridge before a barn swallow skimmed past me. Swallows of any kind in the mountains of North Carolina are like hen-hawks in Massachusetts, — rare enough to be worth following out of sight. As for barn swallows, I had not expected to see them here at all. I kept my eye upon this fellow, therefore, with the more jealousy, and happily for me he seemed to have found the spot very much to his mind. If he was a straggler, as I judged likely in spite of the lateness of the season, he was perhaps all the readier to stay for an hour or two on so favorable a hunting-ground. With him

were half a dozen rough-wings, — probably not stragglers, — hawking over the water; feeding, bathing, and now and then, by way of variety, engaging in some pretty spirited lovers' quarrels. In one such encounter, I remember, one of the contestants received so heavy a blow that she quite lost her balance (the sex was matter of guesswork) and dropped plump into the water; and more than once the fun was interrupted by an irate phœbe, who dashed out upon the makers of it with an ugly snap of his beak, as much as to say, "Come, now, this is my bridge." Mr. Stewart himself could hardly have held stricter notions about the rights of property. The rough-wings frequently perched in the dead trees, and once, at least, the barn swallow did likewise; something which I never saw a bird of his kind do before, to the best of my recollection. For to-day he was in Rome, and had fallen in with the Roman customs.

As I have said already, his presence was unexpected. His name is not included in Mr. Brewster's North Carolina list, and I saw no other bird like him till I was approaching Asheville, a week later, in a rail-

way train. Then I was struck almost at the same moment by two things — a brick chimney and a barn swallow. My start at the sight of red bricks made me freshly aware with what quickness the mind puts away the past and accustoms itself to new and strange surroundings. Man is the slave of habit, we say; but how many of us, even in middle age, have altered our modes of living, our controlling opinions, or our daily occupations, and in the shortest while have forgotten the old order of things, till it has become all like a dream, — a story heard long ago and now dimly remembered. Was it indeed we who lived there, and believed thus, and spent our days so? This capacity for change augurs well for the future of the race, and not less for the future of the individual, whether in this world or in another.

In a previous chapter I have mentioned as provocative of astonishment the ignorance of a North Carolina man, my driver from Walhalla, who had no idea of what I meant by "swallows." His case turned out to be less singular than I thought, however, for when I spoke of it to an exceptionally bright, well-informed farmer in the vicinity

of Highlands, he answered that he saw nothing surprising about it; *he* did n't know what swallows were, neither. Martins he knew, — purple martins, — though there were none hereabout, so far as I could discover, but "swallow," as a bird's name, was a novelty he had never heard of. Here on Stewart's bridge I might have tested the condition of another resident's mind upon the same point, but unfortunately the experiment did not occur to me. He came along on horseback, and I called his attention to the swallows shooting to and fro over the water, a pretty spectacle anywhere, but doubly so in this swallow-poor country. He manifested no very lively interest in the subject; but he made me a civil answer, — which is perhaps more than a hobby-horsical catechist, who travels up and down the world cross-examining his busy fellow mortals, has any good reason for counting upon in such a case. With so many things to be seen and done in this short life, it is obvious that all men's tastes cannot run to ornithology. "Yes," the stranger said, glancing at the swallows, "I expect they have their nests under the bridge." A

civil answer I called it, but it was better than that; indicating, as it did, some acquaintance with the rough-wing's habits, or a shrewd knack at guessing. But the man knew nothing about a bird that nested in barns.

A short distance beyond the bridge, in a clearing over which lay scattered the remains of a house that had formerly stood in it (for even this new country is not destitute of ruins), a pair of snowbirds were chipping nervously, and near the same spot my ear caught the lisping call of my first North Carolina brown creeper. No doubt it was breeding somewhere close by, and my imagination at once fastened upon a loose clump of water-killed trees, from the trunks of which the dry bark was peeling in big sun-warped flakes, as the site of its probable habitation. This was on my first jaunt over the road, and during the busy days that followed I planned more than once to spend an hour here in spying upon the birds. A brown creeper's nest would be something new for me. Now, therefore, on this bright morning, when I was done with the swallows, I walked on

to the right point and waited. A long time passed, or what seemed a long time. With so many invitations pressing upon one from all sides in a vacation country, it is hard sometimes to be leisurely enough for the best naturalistic results. Then, suddenly, I heard the expected *tseep*, and soon the bird made its appearance. Sure enough, it flew against one of the very trees that my imagination had settled upon, ducked under a strip of dead bark, between it and the bole, remained within for half a minute, and came out again. By this time the second bird had appeared, and was waiting its turn for admission. They were feeding their young; and so long as I remained they continued their work, going and coming at longer or shorter intervals. I made no attempt to inspect their operations more nearly; the tree stood in rather deep water, and the nest was situated at an altitude of perhaps twenty feet; but I was glad to see for myself, even at arm's length, as it were, this curious and highly characteristic abode of a bird which in general I meet with only in its idle season. I was surprised to notice that the pair had chosen

a strip of bark which was fastened to the trunk at the upper end and hung loose below. The nest was the better protected from the weather, of course, but it must have been wedged pretty tightly into place, it seemed to me, unless it had some means of support not to be guessed at from the ground. The owners entered invariably at the same point, — in the upper corner. The brown creeper has been flattening itself against the bark of trees for so many thousand years that a very narrow slit suffices it for a doorway.

While I was occupied with this interesting bit of household economy, I heard a clatter of wheels mingled with youthful shouts. Two boys were coming round a bend in the road and bearing down upon me, seated upon an axle-tree between a pair of wheels drawn by a single steer, which was headed for the town at a lively trot, urged on by the cries of the boys, one of whom held the single driving-rope and the other a whip. "How fast can he go?" I asked, as they drew near. I hoped to detain them for a few minutes of talk, but they had no notion of stopping. They had

never timed him, the older one — not the driver — answered, with the merriest of grins. I expressed wonder that they could manage him with a single rein. "Oh, I can drive him without any line at all." "But how do you steer him?" said I. "I yank him and I pull him," was the laconic reply, which by this time had to be shouted over the boy's shoulder; and away the crazy trap went, the wobbling wheels describing all manner of eccentric and nameless curves with every revolution; and the next minute I heard it rattling over the bridge. Undoubtedly the young fellows thought me a green one, not to know that a yank and a steady pull are equivalent to a gee and a haw. "Live and learn," said I to myself. It was a jolly mode of traveling, at all events, as good as a circus, both for the boys and for me.

On my way through the village, at noon, I passed the steer turned out to grass by the roadside, and had a better look at the harness, a simple, homemade affair, including a pair of hames. The driving-rope, which in its original estate might have been part of a clothes-line or a bed-cord,

was attached to a chain which went round or over the creature's head at the base of the horns. The lads themselves were farther down the street, and the younger one nudged the other's elbow with a nod in my direction as I passed on the opposite sidewalk. They seemed to have sobered down at a wonderful rate since their arrival in the "city." I should hardly have known them for the same boys; but no doubt they would wake the echoes again on the road homeward. I hoped so, surely, for I liked them best as I saw them first.

As far as the pleasure of life goes, boys brought up in this primitive mountain country have little to complain of. They may lack certain advantages; in this imperfect world, where two bodies cannot occupy the same space at once, the presence of some things necessitates the absence of others; but most certainly they have their full quota of what in youthful phrase are known as "good times." The very prettiest sight that I saw in North Carolina, not excepting any landscape or flower, — and I saw floral displays of a splendor to bankrupt all description, — was a boy whom I met

one Sunday morning in a steep, disused road outside of the town. I was descending the hill, picking my steps, and he was coming up. Eleven or twelve years old he might have been, cleanly dressed, fit for any company, but bare-legged to the knee. I wished him good-morning, and he responded with the easiest grace imaginable. "You are going to church?" said I. "Yes, sir," and on he went up the hill, "progressing by his own brave steps;" a boy, as Thoreau says, who was "never drawn in a willow wagon;" straight as an arrow, and with motions so elastic, so full of the very spirit of youth and health, that I stood still and gazed after him for pure delight. His face, his speech, his manner, his carriage, all were in keeping. If he does not make a good and happy man, it will be an awful tragedy.

This boy was not a "cracker's" child, I think. Probably he belonged to one of the Northern families, that make up the village for the most part, and have settled the country sparsely for a few miles round about. The lot of the native mountaineers is hard and pinched, and although flocks of children were playing happily enough about the

cabin doors, it was impossible not to look upon them as born to a narrow and cheerless existence. Possibly the fault was partly in myself, since I have no very easy gift with strangers, but I found them, young and old alike, rather uncommunicative.

I recall a family group that I overtook toward the end of an afternoon; a father and mother, both surprisingly young-looking, hardly out of their teens, it seemed to me, with a boy of perhaps six years. They were resting by the roadside as I came up, the father poring over some written document. "You must have been to the city," said I; but all the man could answer was "Howdy." The woman smiled and murmured something, it was impossible to tell what. They started on again at that moment, the grown people each with a heavy bag, which looked as if it might contain meal or flour, and the little fellow with a big bundle. They had four miles still to go, they said; and the road, as I could see for myself, was of the very worst, steep and rugged to the last degree. Partly to see if I could conquer the man, and partly to please myself, I beckoned the youngster to my side and put a

coin into his hand. The shot took effect at once. Father and mother found their voices, and said in the same breath, "Say thank you!" How natural that sounded! It is part of the universal language. Every parent will have his child polite. But the boy, poor thing, was utterly tongue-tied, and could only smile; which, after all, was about the best thing he could have done. The father, too, was still inclined to silence, finding nothing in particular to say, though I did my best to encourage him; but he took pains to keep along with me, halting whenever I did so, and making it manifest that he meant to be with me at the turn in the road, about which I had inquired (needlessly, there is no harm in my now confessing), so that I should by no possibility go astray. Nothing could have been more friendly, and at the corner both he and his wife bade me good-by with simple heartiness. "Good-by, little boy," said I. "Tell him good-by," called both father and mother; but the boy could n't, and there was an end of it. "He 's just as I was at his age; bashful, that 's all." This little speech set matters right. The parents smiled, the boy did likewise, and we

went our different ways, I still pitying the woman, with that heavy bag under her arm, having to make a packhorse of herself on that tiresome mountain road.

However, it is the mountain woman's way to do her full share of the hard work, as I was soon to see farther exemplified; for within half a mile I heard in front of me the grating of a saw, and presently came upon another family group, in the woods on the mountain side, — a woman, three children, and a dog. The woman, no longer young, as we say in the language of compliment, was at one end of a cross-cut saw, and the largest boy, ten or eleven years old, was at the other. They were getting to pieces a huge fallen trunk. "Wood ought to be cheap in this country," said I; and the woman, as she and the boy changed hands to rest themselves, answered that it was. In my heart I thought she was paying dearly for it; but her voice was cheerful, and the whole company was almost a merry one, the younger children laughing at their play, and the dog capering about them in high spirits. The mountain family may be poor, but not with the degrading, squalid poverty of dwell-

ers in a city slum ; and at the very worst the children have a royal playground.

Mountain boys, certainly, I could never much pity; for the girls it was impossible not to wish easier and more generous conditions. Here at Stewart's Pond I detained two of them for a minute's talk: sisters, I judged, the taller one ten years old, or thereabout. I asked them if there were many fish in the pond. The older one thought there were. "I know my daddy ketched five hundred and put in there for Mr. Stewart," she said. Just then the younger girl pulled her sister's sleeve and pointed toward two snakes which lay sunning themselves on the edge of the water, where a much larger one had shortly before slipped off a log into the pond at my approach. "They do no harm?" said I. "No, sir, I don't guess they do," was the answer; a strange-sounding form of speech, though it is exactly like the "I don't think so" of which we all continue to make hourly use, no matter how often some crotchety amateur grammarian — for whom logic is logic, and who hates idiom as a mad dog hates water — may write to the newspapers warning us of its impropriety.

Then the girls, barefooted, both of them, turned into a bushy trail so narrow that it had escaped my notice, and disappeared in the woods. I thought of the villainous-looking rattlesnake that I had seen the day before, freshly killed and tossed upon the side of the road, within a hundred rods of this point, and of the surprise expressed by a resident of the town at my wandering about the country without leggins.

As to the question of snakes and the danger from them, the people here, as is true everywhere in a rattlesnake country, held widely different opinions. Everybody recognized the presence of the pest, and most persons, whatever their own practice might be, advised a measure of caution on the part of strangers. One thing was agreed to on all hands: whoever saw a "rattler" was in duty bound to make an end of it; and one man told me a little story by way of illustrating the spirit of the community upon this point. A woman (not a mountain woman) was riding into town, when her horse suddenly stopped and shied. In the road, directly before her, a snake was coiled, rattling defiance. The woman dismounted, hitched the

frightened horse to a sapling, cut a switch, killed the snake, threw it out of the road, remounted, and went on about her business. It is one advantage of life in wild surroundings that it encourages self-reliance.

In all places, nevertheless, and under all conditions, human nature remains a paradoxical compound. A mountain woman, while ploughing, came into close quarters with a rattlesnake. To save herself she sprang backward, fell against a stone, and in the fall broke her wrist. No doctor being within call, she set the bone herself, made and adjusted a rude splint, and now, as the lady who told me the story expressed it, "has a pretty good arm." That was plucky. But the same woman suffered from an aching tooth some time afterward, and was advised to have it extracted. She would do no such thing. She could n't. She had a tooth pulled once, and it hurt her so that she would never do it again.

Anthropology and ornithology were very agreeably mingled for me on the Hamburg road, — though it seems impossible for me to stay there, the reader may say, — where passers-by were frequent enough to keep me

from feeling lonesome, and yet not so numerous as to disturb the quiet of the place or interfere undûly with my natural historical researches. The human interview to which I look back with most pleasure was with a pair of elderly people who appeared one morning in an open buggy. They were driving from the town, seated side by side in the shadow of a big umbrella, and as they overtook me, on the bridge, the man said "Good-morning," of course, and then, to my surprise, pulled up his horse and inquired particularly after my health. He hoped I was recovering from my indisposition, though I am not sure that he used that rather superfine word. I gave him a favorable account of myself, — wondering all the while how he knew I had been ill, — whereupon he expressed the greatest satisfaction, and his good wife smiled in sympathy. Then, after a word or two about the beauty of the morning, and while I was still trying to guess who the couple could be, the man gathered up the reins with the remark, "I 'm going after some *Ilex monticola* for Charley." "Yes, I know where it is," he added, in response to a question. Then I knew him.

I had been at his house a few evenings before to see his son, who had come home from Biltmore to collect certain rare local plants — the mountain holly being one of them — for the Vanderbilt herbarium. The mystery was cleared, but it may be imagined how taken aback I was when this venerable rustic stranger threw a Latin name at me.

In truth, however, botany and Latin names might almost be said to be in the air at Highlands. A villager met me in the street, one day, and almost before I knew it, we were discussing the specific identity of the small yellow lady's-slippers, — whether there were two species, or, as my new acquaintance believed, only one, in the woods round about. At another time, having called at a very pretty unpainted cottage, — all the prettier for the natural color of the weathered shingles, — I remarked to the lady of the house upon the beauty of *Azalea Vaseyi*, which I had noticed in several dooryards, and which was said to have been transplanted from the woods. I did not understand why it was, I told her, but I could n't find it described in my Chapman's Flora. "Oh, it is there, I am sure it is," she answered; and going into

the next room she brought out a copy of the manual, turned to the page, and showed me the name. It was in the supplement, where in my haste I had overlooked it. I wondered how often, in a New England country village, a stranger could happen into a house, painted or unpainted, and by any chance find the mistress of it prepared to set him right on a question of local botany.

On a later occasion — for thus encouraged I called more than once afterward at the same house — the lady handed me an orchid. I might be interested in it; it was not very common, she believed. I looked at it, thinking at first that I had never seen it before. Then I seemed to remember something. "Is it *Pogonia verticillata?*" I asked. She smiled, and said it was; and when I told her that to the best of my recollection I had never seen more than one specimen before, and that upwards of twenty years ago (a specimen from Blue Hill, Massachusetts), she insisted upon believing that I must have an extraordinary botanical memory, though of course she did not put the compliment thus baldly, but dressed it in some graceful, unanswerable, feminine phrase which I, for

all my imaginary mnemonic powers, have long ago forgotten.

The same lady had the rare *Shortia galacifolia* growing — transplanted — in her grounds, and her husband volunteered to show me one of the few places in the neighborhood of Highlands (this, too, on his own land) where the true lily-of-the-valley — identical with the European plant of our gardens — grows wild. It was something I had greatly desired to see, and was now in bloom. Still another man — but he was only a summer cottager — took me to look at a specimen of the Carolina hemlock (*Tsuga Caroliniana*), a tree of the very existence of which I had before been ignorant. The truth is that the region is most exceptionally rich in its flora, and the people, to their honor be it recorded, are equally exceptional in that they appreciate the fact.

A small magnolia-tree (*M. Fraseri*), in bloom everywhere along the brooksides, did not attract me to any special degree till one day, in an idle hour at Stewart's Pond, I plucked a half-open bud. I thought I had never known so rare a fragrance; delicate and wholesome beyond comparison, and yet

most deliciously rich and fruity, a perfume for the gods. The leaf, too, now that I came really to look at it, was of an elegant shape and texture, untoothed, but with a beautiful "auriculated" base, as Latin-loving botanists say, from which the plant derives its vernacular name, — the ear-leaved umbrella-tree. The waxy blossoms seemed to be quite scentless, but I wished that Thoreau, whose nose was as good as his eyes and his ears, could have smelled of the buds.

The best thing that I found at the pond, however, by long odds the most interesting and unexpected thing that I found anywhere in North Carolina (I speak as a hobbyist), was neither a tree nor a human being, but a bird. I had been loitering along the river-bank just above the pond itself, admiring the magnolias, the silver-bell trees, the lofty hemlocks, — out of the depths of which a "mountain boomer," known to simple Northern folk as a red squirrel, now and then emitted his saucy chatter, — and the Indian's paint-brush (scarlet painted-cup), the brightest and among the most characteristic and memorable of the woodland flowers; listening to the shouts of an olive-sided fly-

catcher and the music of the frogs, one of them a regular Karl Formes for profundity; and in general waiting to see what would happen. Nothing of special importance seemed likely to reward my diligent idleness, and I turned back toward the town. On the way I halted at the bridge, as I always did, and presently a carriage drove over it. Inside sat a woman under an enormous black sunbonnet. She did me, without knowing it, a kindness, and I should be glad to thank her. As the wheels of the carriage struck the plank bridge, a bird started into sight from under it or close beside it. A sandpiper, I thought; but the next moment it dropped into the water and began swimming. Then I knew it for a bird I had never seen before, and, better still, a bird belonging to a family of which I had never seen any representative, a bird which had never for an instant entered into my North Carolina calculations. It was a phalarope, a wanderer from afar, blown out of its course, perhaps, and lying by for a day in this little mountain pond, almost four thousand feet above sea level.

My first concern, as I recovered myself,

was to set down in black and white a complete account of the stranger's plumage; for though I knew it for a phalarope, I must wait to consult a book before naming it more specifically. It would have contributed unspeakably to my peace of mind, just then, had I been better informed about the distinctive peculiarities of the three species which compose the phalarope family; as I certainly would have been, had I received any premonition of what was in store for me. As it was, I must make sure of every possible detail, lest in my ignorance I should overlook some apparently trivial item that might prove, too late, to be all important. So I fell to work, noting the white lower cheek (or should I call it the side of the upper neck?), the black stripe through and behind the eye, the white line just over the eye, the light-colored crown, the rich reddish brown of the nape and the sides of the neck, the white or gray-white under parts, the plain (unbarred) wings, and so on. The particulars need not be rehearsed here. I was possessed by a recollection, or half recollection, that the marginal membrane of the toes was a prime mark of distinction (as

indeed it is, though the only manual I had brought with me turned out not to mention the point); but while for much of the time the bird's feet were visible, it never for so much as a second held them still, and as the water was none too clear and the bottom muddy, it was impossible for me to see how the toes were webbed, or even to be certain that they were webbed at all. Once, as the bird was close to the shore, and almost at my feet, I crouched upon a log, thinking to pick the creature up and examine it; but it moved quietly away for a yard or so, just out of reach, and though I could probably have killed it with a stick, — as a friend of mine killed one some years ago on a mountain lake in New Hampshire,[1] — it was happily too late when the possibility of such a step occurred to me. By that time I was not on collecting terms with the bird. It was "not born for death," I thought, or, if it was, I was not born to play the executioner.

Its activity was amazing. If I had not known this to be natural to the phalarope family, I might have thought the poor thing

[1] The case is recorded in *The Auk*, vol. vi. page 68.

on the verge of starvation, eating for dear life. It moved its head from side to side incessantly, dabbing the water with its bill picking something, — minute insects, I supposed, — from the surface, or swimming among the loose grass, and running its bill down the green blades one after another. Several times, in its eagerness to capture a passing insect, it almost flew over the water, and once it actually took wing for a stroke or two, with some quick, breathless notes, like *cut*, *cut*, *cut*. One thing was certain, it did not care for polliwogs, shoals of which darted about its feet unmolested.

Once a horseman frightened it as he rode over the bridge, but even then it barely rose from the water with a startled *yip*. The man glanced at it (I was just then looking carelessly in another direction), and passed on — to my relief. At that moment the most interesting mountaineer in North Carolina would have found me unresponsive. As for my own presence, the phalarope seemed hardly to notice it, though I stood much of the time within a distance of ten feet, and now and then considerably nearer than that, — without so much as a grass-

blade for cover, — holding my glass upon it steadily till a stitch in my side made the attitude all but intolerable. The lovely bird rode the water in the lightest possible manner, and was easily put about by slight puffs of wind; but it could turn upon an insect with lightning quickness. It was never still for an instant except on two occasions, when it came close to the shore and sat motionless in the lee of a log. There it crouched upon its feet, which were still under water, and seemed to be resting. It preened its feathers, also, and once it rubbed its bill down with its claw, but the motion was too quick for my eye to follow, though I was near enough to see the nostril with perfect distinctness.

I was in love with the bird from the first minute. Its tameness, the elegance of its shape and plumage, the grace and vivacity of its movements, these of themselves were enough to drive a bird-lover wild. Add to them its novelty and unexpectedness, and the reader may judge for himself of my state of mind. It was the dearest and tamest creature I had ever seen, I kept saying to myself, forgetful for the moment of two

blue-headed vireos which at different times had allowed me to stroke and feed them as they sat brooding on their eggs.

Another thing I must mention, as adding not a little to the pleasure of the hour. The moment I set eyes upon the phalarope, before I had taken even a mental note of its plumage, I thought of my friend and correspondent, Celia Thaxter, and of her eager inquiries about the "bay bird," which she had then seen for the first time at the Isles of Shoals — "just like a sandpiper, only smaller, and swimming on the water like a duck." And as the bird before me darted hither and thither, so amazingly agile, I remembered her pretty description of this very trait, a description which I here copy from her letter: —

"He was swimming about the wharf near the landing, a pretty, dainty creature, in soft shades of gray and white, with the 'needle-like beak,' and a rapidity of motion that I have never seen equaled in any living thing except a darting dragon-fly or some restless insect. He was never for one instant still, darting after his food on the surface of the water. He seemed perfectly

tame, was n't the least afraid of anything or anybody, merely moving aside to avoid an oar-blade, and swaying almost on to the rocks with the swirl of the water. I watched him till I was tired, and went away and left him there still cheerfully frisking. I am so glad to tell you of something you have n't seen!"

A year afterward (May 29, 1892), she wrote again, with equal enthusiasm: "If I only had a house of my own here I should make a business of trying desperately hard to bring you here, if only for one of your spare Sundays, to see the 'bay birds' that have been round here literally by the *thousands* for the last month, the swimming sandpipers — *so beautiful!* In great flocks that wheel and turn, and, flying in long masses over the water, show now dark, now dazzling silver as they careen and show the white lining of their wings, like a long, brilliant, fluttering ribbon. I never heard of so many before, about here."

The birds seen at the Isles of Shoals were doubtless either red phalaropes or northern phalaropes, — or, not unlikely, both, — "sea snipe," they are often called; two pelagic,

circumpolar species, the presence of which in unusual numbers off our Atlantic coast was recorded by other observers in the spring of 1892. My bird here in North Carolina, if I read its characters correctly, was of the third species of the family, Wilson's phalarope, larger and handsomer than the others; an inland bird, peculiar to the American continent, breeding in the upper Mississippi Valley and farther north, and occurring in our Eastern country only as a straggler.

That was a lucky hour, an hour worth a long journey, and worthy of long remembrance. It brought me, as I began by saying, a new bird and a new family; a family distinguished not more for its grace and beauty than for the strangeness — the "newness," as to-day's word is — of its domestic relations; for the female phalarope not only dresses more handsomely than the male, but is larger, and in a general way assumes the rights of superiority. She does the courting — openly and ostensibly, I mean — and, if the books are to be trusted, leaves to her mate the homely, plumage-dulling labor of sitting upon the eggs. And why not?

Nature has made her a queen, and dowered her with queenly prerogatives, one of which, by universal consent, is the right to choose for herself the father of her royal children.

Like Mrs. Thaxter, I stayed with my bird till I was tired with watching such preternatural activity; and the next day I returned to the place, hoping to tire myself again in the same delightful manner. But the phalarope was no longer there. Up and down the road I went, scanning the edges of the pond, but the bird had flown. I wished her safely over the mountains, and a mate to her heart's liking at the end of the journey.

BIRDS, FLOWERS, AND PEOPLE

"I 'd rather do anything than to pack," said a North Carolina mountain man. His tone bespoke a fullness of experience; as if a farm-bred Yankee were to say, "I 'd rather do anything than to pick stones in cold weather." He had found me talking with a third man by the wayside on a sultry forenoon. The third man carried a bag of corn on his back, and was on his way from Horse Cove to Highlands (valleys are coves in that part of the South), up the long steep mountain side down which, with frequent stops for admiration of the world below, I had been lazily traveling. He was sick, he told me; and as his appearance corroborated his words, I had been trying to persuade him to leave his load where it was, trust its safety to Providence, and go home. Just then it happened that mountaineer number two came along and delivered himself as above quoted.

He was going to Highlands, also. He had been "putting in a week" trying to buy a cow to replace one that had mired herself and broken her neck. "I would rather have paid down twenty-five dollars in gold," he declared. (The air was full of political silver talk; but gold is the standard, after all, when men come to business.) He knew the invalid, it appeared, for presently he turned into a trail, a short cut through the woods, which till now had escaped my notice, and remarked, "Well, John, I guess I 'll take the narrow way;" and off he went up the slope, while the other man and I continued our dialogue, — I still playing the part of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and Christian still unconvinced, but not indisposed to parley.

He wished to know where I had come from; and when I told him, he said, "Massachusetts! Well, I reckon it 's right hot down there now." He held the common belief of the mountain people that the rest of the earth's surface is mostly uninhabitable in summer-time. One morning, I remember, I said something to an idler on the village sidewalk about the cool night we had just

passed. I meant my little speech as a kind of local compliment, but he took me up at once. It was "pretty hot," he thought, — about as hot a night as he ever knew. He did n't see how folks *lived* down in Charleston; and I partly agreed with him. He had been "borned right here," and had never been farther away than to Seneca; and from his manner of expressing himself I inferred that he hoped never to find himself so far from home again. This was in the midst of a "heated term," when the mercury, at four o'clock in the afternoon, registered 74° on the hotel piazza.

However, it was many degrees warmer than that in Horse Cove (at a considerably lower level) on the day of which I am writing, and a sick man with a bag of corn on his back had good reason to rest halfway up the climb. He had killed "a pretty rattlesnake" a little way back, he told me. "Very dangerous they are," he added, with an evident kindly desire to put a stranger on his guard. As we separated, a man on horseback turned a corner in the road above us, and on looking round, a few minutes later, I was relieved to see that he had lent

the pack-bearer his horse, and was pursuing his own way on foot. And now I thought, not of Bunyan's parable, but of an older and better one.

Though the primary interest of my trip to the North Carolina mountains was rather with the fauna and flora than with the population (as we call it, in our lofty human way of speaking, having no doubt that we are the people), I found, first and last, no small pleasure in the men, women, and children, as I fell in with them out of doors here and there, in the course of my daily perambulations. Poverty-cursed as they looked (the universal "packing" by both sexes over those up-and-down roads, and the shiftless, comfortless appearance of the cabins, were proof enough of a pinched estate), they seemed to be laudably industrious, and, as the world goes, enjoyers of life. If they said little, it was perhaps rather my fault than theirs (the key must fit the lock), and certainly they treated me with nothing but kindness.

More than a fortnight after my interview with the invalid, just described, I was returning to the hotel from an early morning

jaunt down the Walhalla road, when I met a man driving a pair of dwarfish steers hitched to a pair of wheels, on the axle-tree of which was fastened a rude, widely ventilated, home-made box, with an odd-shaped, home-made basket hung on one side of it, — the driver, literally, on the box. I greeted him, and he pulled up. "Well, I see you are still here," he said, after a good-morning. "You have seen me before?" I replied. He was sallow and thin, — the usual mountaineer's condition, — but wore the pleasantest of smiles. "Yes; I saw you down in the Cove with the sick man." He was the pilgrim who took the "narrow way," and was hunting for a cow, though I should not have remembered him. And now, peeping through one of the holes in the box, I saw that he had a calf inside. "A Jersey?" said I. "Part Jersey," he answered. Mr. S—— (one of the villagers, whom by this time I counted as a friend, a white-haired, youngish veteran of the civil war, on the Union side, a neighbor I had "taken to" from the moment I saw him), Mr. S—— had given the calf to the man's father-in-law, and he, the son-in-law, had driven up to the

village to fetch it home. He lived about six miles out, on a side road. I inquired about the two or three houses in sight in the valley clearing below us. It was the "Webb settlement," he said; "so we always call it." I remarked that all hands seemed to have plenty of children. "Yes, plenty of children," he responded, with a laugh; and away he drove.

It was only a few minutes before another man appeared, a foot-passenger this time, walking at a smart pace, with an umbrella on his shoulder, and a new pair of boots slung across it. "You travel faster than I do," said I. "Yes, sir," he answered, smiling (all men like the name of being active), "I go pretty peert when I go." He, too, had six miles before him, and believed it would "begin to rain after a bit." It would have been an imposition upon good nature to detain him. There was a bend in the road just below, and in another minute I heard him spanking round it at a lively trot.

Five minutes more, and a second pedestrian hove in sight. He, likewise, was in haste. "You are all in a hurry to-day," I said to him. I was in pursuit of acquaint-

ance, and in such places it is the part of wisdom, and of good manners as well, to make the most of chance opportunities. "Yes, sir," he made answer, slackening his pace; "I want to get my road done. I've got till Saturday, and I want to get it done;" and he put on steam again, and was gone. His countenance was familiar, but I could not tell where I had seen him, — one of the fathers of the Webb settlement, perhaps. The mountaineers, all thin, all light-complexioned, and all wearing the same drab homespun, look confusingly alike to a newcomer. Whoever the stranger was, he had evidently undertaken to build some part of the new road, and was returning from the village with supplies. In one hand he carried two heavy drills, and under the other arm a strip of pork, a piece of brown paper wrapped about the middle of it, and the long ends dangling. It did my vacationer's heart good to see men so cheerfully industrious; but I thought it a reproach to the order of the world that so much hard work should yield so little of comfort. But then, who knows which was the more comfortable, — the idle, criticising tourist or the sweating

laborer? For the time being, at all events, the laborer had the air of a person inwardly well off. A mountain man with a "contract" was not likely to be envious even of a boarder at "Mrs. Davis's," as the hotel is locally, and very properly, called.

As I went on, passing the height of land and beginning my descent homeward, I met two other foot-passengers, — two women: one old and fat, — the only fat mountaineer of either sex seen in North Carolina, — with a red face and a staff; the other young, slightly built and pale, carrying an old-fashioned shotgun (the ramrod projecting) over her right shoulder. Both wore sunbonnets, and the younger had a braid of hair hanging down her back. With her slender figure, her colorless face, her serious look, and the long musket, she would have made a subject for a painter. This pair I could think of no excuse for accosting, much as I should have enjoyed hearing them talk.[1] Shortly

[1] On a different road, and on a Sunday morning, I met a young colored woman, — an unusual sight, colored people being *personæ non gratæ* in the mountains. We bade each other good-morning, as Christians should. My notebook, I see, records her as dressed in her best clothes, —

after they had gone, I stopped to speak with a small boy who was climbing the hill, with a mewing kitten hugged tightly to his breast. He was taking it home to his cat, he said. She brought in mice and things, and wanted something to give them to. The little fellow was still young enough to understand the mother instinct.

That was a truly social walk. I had never before found one of the mountain roads half so populous. Once, indeed, I drove all day without seeing a passenger of any sort, until, near the end of the afternoon and within a mile or two of the town, I met a solitary horseman.

The *new* road, of which I have spoken, and concerning which I heard so much said on all hands, was really not quite that, but rather a new laying out — with loops here and there to avoid the steeper pitches — of the road from Walhalla, over which I had driven on my entrance into the mountains. My friend Mr. S—— had made the surveys for the work, and the whole town was looking forward eagerly to its completion. To-

a blue gown, I think, — with a handsome light-colored silk parasol in one hand, and a tin pail in the other.

ward sunset, on a Sunday afternoon, I had been out of the village in an opposite direction, and was sitting by the wayside in the Stewart woods, full of flowers and music, where I loved often to linger, when three men approached on foot. "How far have you come?" I inquired. "From Franklin," — about twenty miles distant, — they answered. They were going to work "on the new road up at Stooly" (Satulah Mountain), or so I understood the oldest of the trio, who acted throughout as spokesman. (In my part of the country it is only the professionally idle who walk twenty miles at a stretch.) "Well," said I, none too politely, being nothing but an outsider, "I hope you'll make it better than it was when I came up." He replied, quite good-humoredly, that they were making a good road of it this time. And so they were, comparatively speaking, for I went over the mountain one day on purpose to see it, after I knew who had laid it out, and had begun to feel a personal interest in its success. One of the men carried a hoe, and one a small tin clock. They had no other baggage, I think. When a man works on the road, he

needs a hoe to work with, and a timepiece to tell him when to begin and when to leave off. So I thought to myself; but I am bound to add that these workmen seemed to be going to their task as if it were a privilege. It eases labor to feel that one is doing a good job. That makes the difference, so we used to be told, by Carlyle or some one else, between an artist and an artisan; and I see no reason why such encouraging distinctions should not apply to road-menders as well as to menders of philosophy. There is no such thing as drudgery, even for a man with a hoe, so long as quality is the end in view.

Whatever else was to be said of the roads hereabout, — and the question is of paramount importance in such a country, where mails and supplies must be transported thirty miles (a two days' journey for loaded wagons), — they were almost ideally perfect from a walking naturalist's point of view; neither sandy nor muddy, the two evils of Southern roads in general, and conducting the traveler at once into wild and shady places. The village is closely built, and no matter in which direction I turned, the

houses were quickly behind me, and I was as truly in the woods as if I had made a day's march from civilization. A straggling town, with miles of outlying farms and pasturelands, through the sunny stretches of which a man must make his way forenoon and afternoon, is a state of things at once so usual and so disheartening that the point may well be among the earliest to be considered in planning a Southern vacation.

In a new country an ornithologist thinks first of all of the birds peculiar to it, if any such there are; and I was no sooner off the hotel piazza for my first ante-breakfast stroll at Highlands, than I was on the watch for Carolina snowbirds and mountain solitary vireos, two varieties ("subspecies" is the more modern word) originally described a few years ago, by Mr. Brewster,[1] from specimens taken at this very place. I had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile over the road by which I had driven into the town, after dark, on the evening before, when I was conscious that a bird had flown out from under the overhanging bank just behind me. I turned hastily, and on the instant put my

[1] *The Auk*, vol. iii. pp. 108 and 111.

eye upon the nest. My ear, as it happened, had marked the spot precisely. "Here it is," I thought, and in a fraction of a minute more the anxious mother showed herself, — a snowbird. The nest looked somewhat larger than those I had seen in New Hampshire, but that may have been a fault of memory.[1] It contained young birds and a single egg. I was in great luck, I said to myself; but in truth, as a longer experience showed, the birds were so numerous all about me that it would have been no very difficult undertaking to find a nest or two almost any day.

Birds which had been isolated (separated from the parent stock) long enough to have taken on some constant physical peculiarity — without which they could not be entitled to a distinctive name, though it were only a third one — might be presumed to have acquired at the same time some slight but real idiosyncrasy of voice and language. But if this is true of the Carolina junco, I failed to satisfy myself of the fact. On the first day,

[1] My first impression was correct. Mr. Brewster, as I now notice, says of the nest that it is "larger and composed of coarser material" than that of *Junco hyemalis*.

indeed, I wrote with perfect confidence: "The song is clearly distinguishable from that of the northern bird, — less musical, more woodeny and chippery;" more like the chipping sparrow's, I meant to say. If I had come away then, with one bird's trill to go upon, that would have been my verdict, to be printed, when the time came, without misgiving. But further observation brought further light, or, if the reader will, further obscurity. Some individuals were better singers than others, — so much was to be expected; but taking them together, their music was that of ordinary snowbirds such as I had always listened to. For aught my ears told me, I might have been in Franconia. This is not to assert that the Alleghanian junco has not developed a voice in some measure its own; I believe it has; probability has more authority than personal experience with me in matters of this kind; but the change is as yet too inconsiderable for my senses to appreciate on a short acquaintance, with no opportunity for a direct comparison. In such cases, it is perhaps true that one needs to trust the first lively impression, — which has, undeniably,

its own peculiar value, — or to wait the result of absolute familiarity. My stay of three weeks gave me neither one thing nor another; it was long enough to dissipate my first feeling of certainty, but not long enough to yield a revised and settled judgment.

The mountain vireo (*Vireo solitarius alticola*), like the Carolina snowbird, may properly be called a native of Highlands; and, like the snowbird, it proved to be common. My first sight of it was in the hotel yard, but I found it — single pairs — everywhere. A look at the feathers of the back through an opera-glass showed at once the principal distinction — apart from a superiority in size, not perceptible at a distance — on which its subspecific identity is based; but though to its original describer its song sounded very much finer than the northern bird's, I could not bring myself to the same conclusion. I should never have remarked in it anything out of the common. Once, to be sure, I heard notes which led me to say, "There! that voice is more like a yellow-throat's, — fuller and rounder than a typical solitary's;" but that might have happened anywhere; and at all other times,

although I had the point continually in mind, I could only pronounce the song to be exactly what my ear was accustomed to, — sweet and everything that was beautiful, but a solitary vireo's song, and nothing else. And this, to my thinking, is praise enough. There is no bird-song within my acquaintance that excels the solitary's in a certain intimate expressiveness, affectionateness, home-felt happiness, and purity. Not that it has all imaginable excellencies, — the unearthly, spiritual quality of the best of our woodland thrush music, for example ; but such as it is, an utterance of love and love's felicity, it leaves nothing to ask for. What a contrast between it and the red-eye's comparatively meaningless and feelingless music! And yet, so far as mere form is concerned, the two songs may be considered as built upon the same model, if not variations of the same theme. There must be a world-wide difference between the two species, one would say, in the matter of character and temperament.

My arrival at Highlands seemed to have been coincident with that of an extraordinary throng of rose-breasted grosbeaks. For the first few days, especially, the whole

countryside was alive with them, till I felt as if I had never seen grosbeaks before. Their warbling was incessant; so incessant, and at the same time so exceedingly smooth and sweet, — "mellifluous" is precisely the word, — that I welcomed it almost as a relief when the greater part of the chorus moved on. After such a surfeit of honeyed fluency, I was prepared better than ever to appreciate certain of our humbler musicians, — with a touch of roughness in the voice and something of brokenness in the tune; birds, for instance, like the black-throated green warbler, the yellow-throated vireo, and the scarlet tanager. But if I was glad the crowd had gone, I was glad also that a goodly sprinkling of the birds had remained; so that there was never a day when I did not see and hear them. The rose-breast is a lovely singer. In my criticism of him I am to be understood as meaning no more than this: that he, like every other artist, has the defects of his good qualities. Smoothness is a virtue in music as in writing; but it is not the only virtue, nor the one that wears longest.

After the grosbeaks, whose great abun-

dance was but transitory, two of the most numerous birds were the Canadian flycatching warbler and the black-throated blue, — two Northerners, as I had always thought of them. Every mountain stream was overhung, mile after mile, by a tangle of rhododendron and laurel, and out of every such tangle came the hoarse drawling *kree, kree, kree* of the black-throated blue, and the sharp, vivacious, half-wrennish song of the Canadian flycatcher. I had never seen either species in anything near such numbers; and I may include the Blackburnian warbler in the same statement. Concerning the black-throated blue, it is to be said that within a year or two the Alleghanian bird has been discriminated by Dr. Coues as a local race, with a designation of its own, — *Dendroica cærulescens cairnsi*, — the points of distinction being its smaller size and the color of the middle back, black instead of blue. I cannot recollect that I perceived anything peculiar about its notes, nor, so far as appears, did Mr. Brewster do so; yet it would not surprise me if such peculiarities were found to exist. The best of ears (and there can be very few to surpass Mr. Brew-

ster's, I am sure) cannot take heed of everything, especially in a strange piece of country, with a voice out of every bush calling for attention.

A few birds, too familiar to have attracted any particular notice on their own account, became interesting because of the fact that they were not included among those found here by Mr. Brewster. One of these was the Maryland yellow-throat, of which Mr. Brewster saw no signs above a level of 2100 feet. (The elevation of Highlands, I may remind the reader, is 3800 feet.) At the time of my visit, the song, *witchery, witchery, witchery*, or *fidgety, fidgety, fidgety* (every listener will transliterate the dactyls for himself), was to be heard daily from the hotel piazza, though so far away that, with Mr. Brewster's negative experience in mind, I deferred listing the name till, after two or three days, I found leisure to go down to the swamp out of which the notes, whatever they were, evidently proceeded. Then it transpired that at least five males were in song, in four different places. And later (May 25) I happened upon one in still another and more distant spot. Probably the

species had come in since Mr. Brewster's day (eleven years before), with some change of local conditions, — the cutting down of a piece of forest, perhaps, and the formation of a bushy swamp in its place. A villager closely observant of such things, and well acquainted with the bird, assured me from his own recollection of the matter (and he remembered Mr. Brewster's visit well) that such was pretty certainly the case.

Another bird seen almost daily, though in limited numbers, was the red-winged blackbird, which Mr. Brewster noticed only in a few places in the lower valleys. It seemed well within the range of probability that the same changes which had brought in one lover of sedgy tussocks and button-bushes should have attracted also another. I made no search for nests, but the fact that the birds were seen constantly from May 7 to May 27 may be taken as reasonably conclusive evidence that they were on their breeding-grounds.

Two or more pairs of phœbes had settled in the neighborhood, and two or more pairs of parula warblers. The former were not found by Mr. Brewster above a level of 3000

feet, and the latter he missed at Highlands, although, as he says, the presence of trees hung with usnea lichens made their absence a surprise.

Hardly less rememberable than these differences of experience was one striking coincidence. On the 25th of May, when I had been at Highlands more than a fortnight, I was sitting on the veranda waiting for the dinner-bell, and reading the praises of "free silver" in a Georgia newspaper, when I jumped to my feet at the whistle of a Baltimore oriole. I started at once in pursuit, and presently came up with the fellow, a resplendent old male, in a patch of shrubbery bordering the hotel grounds. I kept as near him as I could (in Massachusetts he would scarcely have drawn a second look), and even followed him across the street into a neighbor's yard. He was the only one I had seen (he was piping again the next morning, the last of my stay), and on referring to Mr. Brewster's paper I found that he too met with one bird here,[1] and in exactly

[1] "At Highlands I saw a single male, — an unusually brilliant one, — which I was told was the only bird of the kind in the vicinity."

the same spot. The keeper of the hotel remembered the circumstance and the pleasure of Mr. Brewster over it. In my case, at any rate, the lateness and unexpectedness of the bird's appearance, together with what a certain scholarly friend of mine would have called his "uniquity," made him the bringer of a most agreeable noonday excitement. Where he had come from, and whether he had brought a mate with him, were questions I had no means of answering. He reminded me of my one Georgia oriole, on the field of Chickamauga.

The road to Horse Cove, of which I have already spoken, offered easy access to a lower and more summery level, the land at this point dropping almost perpendicularly for about a thousand feet. In half an hour the pedestrian was in a new climate, with something like a new fauna about him. Here were such birds as the Kentucky warbler, the hooded warbler, the cardinal grosbeak, and the Acadian flycatcher, none of them to be discovered on the plateau above. Here, also, — but this may have been nothing more than an accident, — were the only bluebirds (a single family) that I saw

anywhere until, on my journey out of the mountains, I descended into the beautiful Cullowhee Valley.

At Highlands the birds were a mixed lot, Southerners and Northerners delightfully jumbled: a few Carolina wrens (one was heard whistling from the summit of Whiteside!); a single Bewick wren, singing and dodging along a fence in the heart of the village; tufted titmice; Carolina chickadees; Louisiana water thrushes and turkey buzzards: and on the other side of the account, brown creepers, red-bellied nuthatches, black-throated blues, Canada warblers, Blackburnians, snow-birds, and olive-sided flycatchers.

An unexpected thing was the commonness of blue golden-winged warblers, chats, and brown thrashers (the chats less common than the other two) at an elevation of 3800 feet. Still more numerous, in song continually, even on the summit of Satulah, were the chestnut-sided warblers, although Mr. Brewster, in his tour through the region, "rarely saw more than one or two in any single day:" a third instance, as seemed likely, of a species that had taken advan-

tage of new local conditions — an increase of shrubby clearings, in the present case — within the last ten years. Here, as everywhere, the presence of some birds and the absence of others were provocative of questions. Why should the Kentucky warbler sing from rhododendron thickets halfway up the slope at the head of Horse Cove, and never be tempted into other thickets, in all respects like them, just over the brow of the cliff, 500 feet higher? Why should the summer yellow-bird, which pushes its hardy spring flight beyond the Arctic circle, restrict itself here in the Carolinas to the low valley lands (I saw it at Walhalla and in the Cullowhee Valley), and never once choose a nesting-site in appropriate surroundings at a little higher level? Why should the chat and the blue golden-wing find life agreeable at Highlands, and their regular neighbors, the prairie warbler and the white-eyed vireo, so persistently refuse to follow them? And why, in the first half of May, was there so strange a dearth of migrants in these attractive mountain woods? — a few blackpoll warblers (last seen on the 18th), a single myrtle-bird (on

the 7th), and a crowd of rose-breasted grosbeaks and Blackburnian warblers (on the 8th and 9th, especially) being almost the only ones to fall under my notice. After all, one of the best birds I saw, not forgetting the Wilson's phalarope, — my adventure with which has been detailed in a previous chapter, — was a song sparrow singing from a dense swampy thicket on the 25th of May. So far as I am aware, no bird of his kind has ever before been reported in summer from a point so far south. He looked natural, but not in the least commonplace, as, after a long wait on my part, — for absolute certainty's sake, — he hopped out into sight. I was proud to have made one discovery!

In such a place, so limited in the range of its physical conditions, — a village surrounded by forest, — the birds, however numerous they might be, counted as individuals, were sure to be of comparatively few species. Omitting such as were certainly, or almost certainly, migrants or strays, — the blackpoll, the myrtle-bird, the barn swallow, the king-bird, the solitary sandpiper, and the phalarope, — and such

as were found only at a lower level, in Horse Cove and elsewhere; omitting, too, all birds of prey, — few, and for the most part but imperfectly identified; restricting myself to birds fully made out and believed to be summering in the immediate neighborhood of Highlands; omitting the raven, of course, — I counted but fifty-nine species.

All things considered, I was not inconsolable at finding my ornithological activities in some measure abridged. I had the more time, though still much too little, for other pursuits. It would have been good to spend the whole of it upon the plants, or in admiring the beauties of the country itself. As it was, I plucked a blossom here and there, stored up a few of the more striking of them in the memory, and enjoyed many an hour in gazing upon the new wild world, where, no matter how far I climbed, there was nothing to be seen on all sides but a sea of hills, wave rising beyond wave to the horizon's rim.

The horizon was never far off. I was twice on Satulah and twice on Whiteside, from which latter point, by all accounts, I should have had one of the most extensive

and beautiful prospects to be obtained in North Carolina; but I had fallen upon one of those "spells of weather," common in mountainous places, which make a visitor feel as if nothing were so rare as a transparent atmosphere. For ordinary lowland purposes the days were no doubt favorable enough: a pleasing, wholesome alternation of rain and shine, wind and calm, with no lack of thunder and lightning, and once, at least, a lively hailstorm. "Weather like this I have never seen elsewhere. Such air!" So I wrote in my enthusiasm, thinking of physical comfort, — a man who wished to walk and sit still by turns, and be neither sunstruck nor chilled; but withal, there was never an hour of clear distance till the morning I came away, when mountain ascents were no longer to be thought of. The world was all in a cover of mist, and the outlying hills, one beyond another, with the haze settling into the valleys between them, were, as I say, like the billows of the sea. Nothing could have been more beautiful, perhaps; but a curtain is a curtain, and I longed to see it rise. A change of wind, a puff from the northwest, and creation would

indeed have "widened in man's view." That was not to be, and all those lofty North Carolina peaks — of which, to a New Englander, there seem to be so many [1] — were seen by me only from railway trains and from the hotel veranda at Asheville, on my journey homeward. On Satulah and Whiteside I was forced to please myself with the glory of the foreground. What lay beyond the mist was matter for dreams.

But even as things were, I was not so badly used. There was more beauty in sight than I could begin to see, and, notwithstanding the comparative narrowness of the outlook, — partly because of it, — one of my most enjoyable forenoons was spent on the broad, open, slightly rounded summit of Satulah. Here and there ("more here than there," my pencil says) a solitary cabin was visible, or a bit of road, a ribbon of brown amidst the green of the forest, but no village, nor so much as a hamlet. The only other signs of human existence were a light smoke,

[1] According to a publication of the State Board of Agriculture, North Carolina contains forty-three peaks more than 6000 feet high, eighty-two others more than 5000 feet high, and an "innumerable" multitude the altitude of which is between 4000 and 5000 feet.

barely distinguishable, rising from Horse Cove as I guessed, and, for a few minutes, a man whom my eye fell upon most unexpectedly, a motionless speck, though he was walking, far down the Walhalla road. I turned my glass that way, and behold, he had the usual bag of grain on his back.

The date was May 12. I had been in Highlands less than a week, and my thoughts still ran upon ravens, the birds which, more even than the southern snowbird and the mountain vireo, I had come hither to seek. They were said often to fly over, and this surely should be a place to see them. They could not escape me, if they passed within a mile. But though I kept an eye out, as we say, and an ear open, it was a vigil thrown away. Buzzards, swifts, and a bunch of twittering goldfinches were all the birds that "flew over." A chestnut-sided warbler sang so persistently from the mountain side just below that his sharp voice became almost a trouble. From the same quarter rose the songs of an oven-bird, a rose-breasted grosbeak, and a scarlet tanager. On the summit itself were snowbirds and chewinks; and once, to my delight, a field sparrow gave out

a measure or two. After all, go where you will, you will hear few voices that wear better than his, — clear, smooth, most agreeably modulated, and temperately sweet.

The only trees I remember at the very top of the mountain were a few dwarfed and distorted pines and white oaks, — enough to remind a Yankee that he was not in New Hampshire. On the other hand, here grew our Massachusetts huckleberry (*Gaylussacia resinosa*), which I had seen nowhere below, where a great abundance of the buckberry — so I think I heard it called (*G. ursina*), — taller bushes, more comfortable to pick from, with larger blossoms — seemed to have taken its place. I should have been glad to try the fruit, which was described as of excellent quality. On that point, with no thought of boasting, I could have spoken as an expert. With the huckleberry was chokeberry, another New England acquaintance, fair to look upon, but a hypocrite, — "by their fruits ye shall know them;" and underneath, among the stones, were common yellow five-fingers, bird-foot violets, and leaves of trailing arbutus, three-toothed potentilla (a true mountain-lover), checker-

berry, and galax. With them, but deserving a sentence by themselves, were the exquisite vernal iris and the scarlet painted cup, otherwise known as the Indian's paintbrush and prairie fire, splendid for color, and in these parts, to my astonishment, a frequenter of the forest. I should have looked for it only in grassy meadows. Here and there grew close patches of the pretty, alpine-looking sand myrtle (*Leiophyllum buxifolium*), thickly covered with small white flowers, — a plant which I had seen for the first time the day before on the summit of Whiteside. Mountain heather I called it, finding no English name in Chapman's Flora. Stunted laurel bushes in small bud were scattered over the summit. A little later they would make the place a flower garden. A single rose-acacia tree had already done its best in that direction, with a full crop of gorgeous rose-purple clusters. The winds had twisted it and kept it down, but could not hinder its fruitfulness.

These things, and others like them, I noticed between times. For the most part, my eyes were upon the grand panorama, a wilderness of hazy, forest-covered mountains,

as far as the eye could go; nameless to me, all of them, with the exception of the two most conspicuous, — Whiteside on the one hand, and Rabun Bald on the other. For my comfort a delicious light breeze was stirring, and the sky, as it should be when one climbs for distant prospects, was sprinkled with small cumulus clouds, which in turn dappled the hills with moving shadows. One thing brought home to me a truth which in our dullness we ordinarily forget: that the earth itself is but a shadow, a something that appeareth, changeth, and passeth away. The rocks at my feet were full of pot-holes, such as I had seen a day or two before, the water still swirling in them, at Cullasajah Falls. As universal time is reckoned, — if it *is* reckoned, — old Satulah and all that forest-covered world which I saw, or thought I saw, from it, were but of yesterday, a "divine improvisation," and would be gone to-morrow.

More beautiful than the round prospect from Satulah, though perhaps less stimulating to the imagination, was the view from the edge of the mountain wall at the head of Horse Cove. Here, under a chestnut tree,

I spent the greater part of a half day, the valley with its road and its four or five houses straight at my feet. A dark precipice of bare rock bounded it on the right, a green mountain on the left, and in the distance southward were ridges and peaks without number. A few of the nearer hills I knew the names of by this time: Fodderstack, Bearpen, Hogback, Chimneytop, Terrapin, Shortoff, Scaly, and Whiteside. Satulah was the only *fine* name in the lot; and that, for a guess, is aboriginal. The North American Indians had a genius for names, as the Greeks had for sculpture and poetry, and will be remembered for it.

I had come to the brow of the cliffs, at a place called Lover's Leap, in search of a particular kind of rhododendron. It bore a small flower, my informant had said, and grew hereabout only in this one spot. It proved to be *R. punctatum*, new to me, and now (May 23) in early blossom. Four days afterward, in the Cullowhee and Tuckaseegee valleys, I saw riverbanks and roadsides lined with it; very pretty, of course, being a rhododendron, but not to be compared in that respect with the purple rhododendron

or mountain rose-bay (*R. Catawbiense*). That, also, was to be found here, but very sparingly, as far as I could discover. I felicitated myself on having seen it in its glory on the mountains of southeastern Tennessee. The common large rhododendron (*R. maximum*) stood in thickets along all the brooks. I must have walked and driven past a hundred miles of it, on the present trip, it seemed to me; but I have never been at the South late enough to see it in flower.

What I shall remember longest about the flora of Highlands — and there is no part of eastern North America that is botanically richer, I suppose — is the azaleas. When I drove up from Walhalla, on the 6th of May, the woods were bright, mile after mile, with the common pink species (*A. nudiflora*); and at Highlands, in some of the dooryards, I found in full bloom a much lovelier kind, — also pink, and also leafless, — *A. Vaseyi*, as it turned out: a rare and lately discovered plant, of which the village people are justly proud. I could not visit its wild habitat without a guide, they told me. Within a week or so after my arrival the real glory of the spring was upon us: the

woods were lighted up everywhere with the flame-colored azalea; and before it was gone, — while it was still at its height, indeed, — the familiar sweet-scented white azalea (*A. viscosa*), the "swamp pink" of my boyhood, came forward to keep it company and lend it contrast. By that time I had seen all the rhododendrons and azaleas mentioned in Chapman's Flora, including *A. arborescens*, a tardy bloomer, which a botanical collector, with whom I was favored to spend a day on the road, pointed out to me in the bud.

The splendor of *A. calendulacea*, as displayed here, is never to be forgotten; nor is it to be in the least imagined by those who have seen a few stunted specimens of the plant in northern gardens. The color ranges from light straw-color to the brightest and deepest orange, and the bushes, thousands on thousands, no two of them alike, stand, not in rows or clusters, but broadly spaced, each by itself, throughout the hillside woods.

They were never out of sight, and I never could have enough of them. Wherever I went, I was always stopping short before one bush and another; admiring this one for the brilliancy or delicacy of its floral tints, and

that one for its bold and pleasing habit. For as the plants do not grow in close ranks, so they do not put forth their flowers in a mass. They know a trick better than that. Thousands of shrubs, but every one in its own place, to be separately looked at; and on every shrub a few sprays of bloom, each well apart from all the others; one twig bearing nothing but leaves, another full of blossoms; a short branch here, a longer one there; and again, a smooth straight stem shooting far aloft, holding at the tip a bunch of leaves and flowers; everything free, unstudied, and most irregularly graceful, as if the bushes had each an individuality as well as a tint of its own. Often it was not a bush that I stood still to take my fill of, but a single branch, — as beautiful, I thought, as if it had been the only one in the world.

One walk on Satulah — not to the summit, but by a roundabout course through the woods to a bold cliff on the southern side (all the mountains, as a rule, are rounded on the north, and break off sharply on the south) — was literally a walk through an azalea show; first the flame-colored, bushes beyond count and variety beyond descrip-

tion; and then, a little higher, a plentiful display of the white viscosa, more familiar and less showy, but hardly less attractive.

Better even than this wild Satulah garden was a smaller one nearer home: a triangular hillside, broad at the base and pointed at the top, as if it were one face of a pyramid; covered loosely with grand old trees, — oaks, chestnuts, and maples; the ground densely matted with freshly grown ferns, largely the cinnamon osmunda, clusters of lively green and warm brown intermixed; and everywhere, under the trees and above the ferns, mountain laurel and flame-colored azalea, — the laurel blooms pale pink, almost white, and the azalea clusters yellow of every conceivable degree of depth and brightness. A zigzag fence bounded the wood below, and the land rose at a steep angle, so that the whole was held aloft, as it were, for the beholder's convenience. It was a wonder of beauty, with nothing in the least to mar its perfection, — the fairest piece of earth my eye ever rested upon. The human owner of it, Mr. Selleck (why should I not please myself by naming him, a land-owner who knew the worth of his possession!), had asked me

to go and see it; and for his sake and its own, as well as for my own sake and the reader's, I wish I could show it as it was. It rises before me at this moment, like the rhododendron cliffs on Walden's Ridge, and will do so, I hope, to my dying day.

VIRGINIA

A NOOK IN THE ALLEGHANIES

I

I LEFT Boston at nine o'clock on the morning of April 23, and reached Pulaski, in southwestern Virginia, at ten o'clock the next forenoon, exactly on schedule time, — or within five minutes of it, to give the railroad no more than its due. It was a journey to meet the spring, — which for a Massachusetts man is always a month tardy, — and as such it was speedily rewarded. Even in Connecticut there were vernal signs, a dash of greenness here and there in the meadows, and generous sproutings of skunk cabbage about the edges of the swamps; and once out of Jersey City we were almost in a green world. At Bound Brook, I think it was, the train stopped where a Norway maple opposite my window stood all in a yellow mist of blossoms, and chimney swifts were shooting hither and thither athwart the

bright afternoon sky. By the time Philadelphia was reached, or by the time we were done with running in and out of its several stations, the night had commenced falling, and I saw nothing more of the world, with all that famous valley of the Shenandoah, till I left my berth at Roanoke. There the orchards — apple-trees and peach-trees together — were in full bloom, and on the slopes of the hills, as we pushed in among them, rounding curve after curve, shone gorgeous red patches of the Judas-tree, with sprinklings of columbines, violets, marsh-marigolds, and dandelions, and splashes of deep orange-yellow, — clusters of some flower then unknown to me, but pretty certainly the Indian puccoon; not the daintiest of blossoms, perhaps, but among the most effective under such fugitive, arm's-length conditions. A plaguing kind of pleasure it is to ride past such things at a speed which makes a good look at them impossible, as once, for the better part of a long forenoon, in the flatwoods of Florida and southern Georgia, I rode through swampy places bright with splendid pitcher-plants, of a species I had never seen and knew nothing about; strain-

ing my eyes to make out the yellow blossoms, deploring the speed of the train, — which, nevertheless, brought me into Macon several hours after I should have been in Atlanta, — wishing for my Chapman's Flora (packed away in my trunk, of course), and bewailing the certainty that I was losing the only opportunity I should ever have to see so interesting a novelty. And still, — I can say it now, — half a look is better than no vision.

For fifty miles beyond Roanoke we traveled southward; but an ascent of a thousand feet offset, and more than offset, the change of latitude, so that at Pulaski we found the apple-trees not yet in flower, but showing the pink of the buds. The venerable, pleasingly unsymmetrical sugar maples in the yard of the inn (the reputed, and real, comforts of which had drawn me to this particular spot) were hung full of pale yellow tassels, and vocal with honey-bees. Spring was here, and I felt myself welcome.

Till luncheon should be ready, I strayed into the border of the wood behind the town, and, wandering quite at a venture, came by good luck upon a path which fol-

lowed the tortuous, deeply worn bed of a brook through a narrow pass between steep, sparsely wooded, rocky hills. Along the bank grew plenty of the common rhododendron, now in early bud, and on either side of the path were trailing arbutus and other early flowers. Yes, I had found the spring, not summer. And the birds bore the same testimony: thrashers, chippers, field sparrows, black-and-white creepers, and a Carolina chickadee. Summer birds, like summer flowers, were yet to come. A brief song, repeated at intervals from the ragged, half-cleared hillside near a house, as I returned to the village, puzzled me agreeably. It should be the voice of a Bewick's wren, I thought, but the notes seemed not to tally exactly with my recollections of a year ago, on Missionary Ridge. However, I made only a half-hearted attempt to decide the point. There would be time enough for such investigations by and by. Meanwhile, it would be a poor beginning to take a first walk in a new country without bringing back at least one uncertainty for expectation to feed upon. It is always part of to-day's wisdom to leave something for to-morrow's

search. So I seem to remember reasoning with myself; but perhaps a thought of the noonday luncheon had something to do with my temporizing mood.

In any case no harm came of it. The singer was at home for the season, and the very next morning I went up the hill and made sure of him: a Bewick's wren, as I had guessed. I heard him there on sundry occasions afterward. Sometimes he sang one tune, sometimes another. The song heard on the first day, and most frequently, perhaps, at other times, consisted of a prolonged indrawn whistle, followed by a trill or jumble of notes (not many birds trill, I suppose, in the technical sense of that word), as if the fellow had picked up his music from two masters, — a Bachman finch and a song sparrow. It soon transpired, greatly to my satisfaction, that this was one of the characteristic songsters of the town. One bird sang daily not far from my window (the first time I heard him I ran out in haste, looking for some new sparrow, and only came to my senses when halfway across the lawn), and I never walked far in the town (the city, I ought in civility to say)

without passing at least two or three. Sometimes as many as that would be within hearing at once. They preferred the town to the woods and fields, it was evident, and for a singing-perch chose indifferently a fence picket, the roof of a hen-coop, a chimney-top, or the ridgepole of one of the churches, — which latter, by the bye, were most unchristianly numerous. The people are to be congratulated upon having so jolly and pretty a singer playing hide-and-seek — the wren's game always — in their house-yards and caroling under their windows. As a musician he far outshines the more widely known house wren, though that bird, too, is excellent company, with his pert ways, at once furtive and familiar, and his merry gurgle of a tune. If he would only come back to our sparrow-cursed Massachusetts gardens and orchards, as I still hope he will some time do, I for one would never twit him upon his inferiority to his Bewickian cousin or to anybody else.

The city itself would have repaid study, if only for its unlikeness to cities in general. It had not "descended out of heaven," so much was plain, though this is not what I

mean by its unlikeness to other places; neither did it seem to have grown up after the old-fashioned method, a "slow result of time," — first a hamlet, then a village, then a town, and last of all a city. On the contrary, it bore all the marks of something built to order; in the strictest sense, a city made with hands. And so, in fact, it is; one of the more fortunate survivals of what the people of southwestern Virginia are accustomed to speak of significantly as "the boom," — a grand attempt, now a thing of the past, but still bitterly remembered, to make everybody rich by a concerted and enthusiastic multiplication of nothing by nothing.

Such a community, I repeat, would have been an interesting and very "proper study;" but I had not come southward in a studious mood. I meant to be idle, having a gift in that direction which I am seldom able to cultivate as it deserves. It is one of the best of gifts. I could never fall in with what the poet Gray says of it in one of his letters. "Take my word and experience upon it," he writes, "doing nothing is a most amusing business, and yet neither

something nor nothing gives me any pleasure." He begins bravely, although the trivial word "amusing" wakens a distrust of his sincerity; but what a pitiful conclusion! How quickly the boom collapses! It is to be said for him, however, that he was only twenty years old at the time, and a relish for sentiment and reverie — that is to say, for the pleasures of idleness — is apt to be little developed at that immature age. I had passed that point by some years; I was sure I could enjoy a week of dreaming; and, unlike Bewick's wren, I took to the woods.

To that end I returned again and again to the brookside path, on which I had so fortunately stumbled. A man on my errand could have asked nothing better, unless, perchance, there had been a mile or two more of it. Following it past two or three tumble-down cabins, the stroller was at once out of the world; a single bend in the course of the brook, and the hills closed in behind him, and the town might have been a thousand miles away. Life itself is such a path as this, I reflected. The forest shuts behind us, and is open only at our feet, with

here and there a flower or a butterfly or a strain of music to take up our thoughts, as we travel on toward the clearing at the end.

For the first day or two the deciduous woods still showed no signs of leafage, but tall, tree-like shadbushes were in flower, — fair brides, veiled as no princess ever was, — and a solitary red maple stood blushing at its own premature fruitfulness. Here a man walked between acres of hepatica and trailing arbutus, — the brook dividing them, — while the path was strewn with violets, anemones, buttercups, bloodroot, and houstonia. In one place was a patch of some new yellow flowers, like five-fingers, but more upright, and growing on bracted scapes; barren strawberries (*Waldsteinia*) Dr. Gray told me they were called, and one more Latin name had blossomed into a picture. A manual of botany, annotated with place-names and dates, gets after a time to be truly excellent reading, a refreshment to the soul, in winter especially, as name after name calls up the living plant and all the wild beauty that goes with it. And with the thought of the barren strawberry I can see, what I had all but forgotten, though it

was one of the first things I noticed, the sloping ground covered with large, round, shiny, purplish-green (evergreen) leaves, all exquisitely crinkled and toothed. With nothing but the leaves to depend upon, I could only conjecture the plant to be galax, a name which caught my eye by the sheerest accident, as I turned the pages of the Manual looking for something else; but the conjecture turned out to be a sound one, as the sagacious reader will have already inferred from the fact of its mention.

In such a place there was no taking many steps without a halt. My gait was rather a progressive standing still than an actual progress; so that it mattered little whither or how far the path might carry me. I was not going somewhere, — I was already there; or rather, I was both at once. Every stroller will know what I mean. Fruition and expectation were on my tongue together; to risk an unscriptural paradox, what I saw I yet hoped for. The brook, tumbling noisily downward, — in some places over almost regular flights of stone steps, — now in broad sunshine, now in the shade of pines and hemlocks and rhododen-

drons, was of itself a cheerful companionship, its inarticulate speech chiming in well with thoughts that were not so much thoughts as dumb sensations.

Here and there my footsteps disturbed a tiny blue butterfly, a bumblebee, or an emerald beetle, — lovers of the sun all of them, and therefore haunters of the path. Once a grouse sprang up just before me, and at another time I stopped to gain sight of a winter wren, whose querulous little song-sparrow-like note betrayed his presence under the overhanging sod of the bank, where he dodged in and out, pausing between whiles upon a projecting root, to emphasize his displeasure by nervous gesticulatory bobbings. He meant I should know what he thought of me; and I would gladly have returned the compliment, but saw no way of doing so. It is a fault in the constitution of the world that we receive so much pleasure from innocent wild creatures, and can never thank them in return. Black-and-white creepers were singing at short intervals, and several pairs of hooded warblers seemed already to have made themselves at home among the rhododendron bushes.

Just a year before I had taken my fill of their music on Walden's Ridge, in Tennessee. Then it became almost an old story; now, if the truth must be told, I mistook the voice for a stranger's. It was much better than I remembered it; fuller, sweeter, less wiry. Perhaps the birds sang better here in Virginia, I tried to think; but that comfortable explanation had nothing else in its favor. It was more probable, I was bound to conclude, that the superior quality of the Kentucky warbler's music, which was all the time in my ears on Walden's Ridge, had put me unjustly out of conceit with the performance of its less taking neighbor. At all events, I now voted the latter a singer of decided merit, and was ready to unsay pretty much all that I had formerly said against it. I went so far, indeed, as to grow sarcastic at my own expense, for in my field memoranda I find this entry: "The hooded warbler's song is very little like the redstart's, in spite of what Torrey has written." Verily the pencil is mightier than the pen, and a note in the field is worth two in the study. Yet that, after all, is an unfair way of putting the matter, since the Tennessee

note also was made in the field. Let one note correct the other; or, better still, let each stand for whatever of truth it expresses. Happily, there is no final judgment on such themes. One thing I remarked with equal surprise and pleasure: the song reminded me again and again of the singing of Swainson's thrush; not by any resemblance between the two voices, it need hardly be said, but by a similarity in form. Oven-birds were here, speaking their pieces in earnest schoolroom fashion; a few chippering snow-birds excited my curiosity (common *Junco hyemalis*, for aught I could discover, but I profess no certainty on so nice a point); and here and there a flock of migrating white-throated sparrows bestirred themselves lazily, as I brushed too near their browsing-places.

So I dallied along, accompanied by a staid, good-natured, woodchuck-loving collie (he had joined me on the hotel piazza, with a friendly look in his face, as much as to say, "The top of the morning to you, stranger. If you are out for a walk, I 'm your dog"), till presently I came to a clearing. Here the path all at once disappeared, and

I made no serious effort to pick it up again. Why should I go farther? I could never be farther from the world, nor was I likely to find anywhere a more inviting spot; and so, climbing the stony hillside, over beds of trailing arbutus bloom and past bunches of birdfoot violets, I sat down in the sun, on a cushion of long, dry grass.

The gentlest of zephyrs was stirring, the very breath of spring, soft and of a delicious temperature. My New England cheeks, winter-crusted and still half benumbed, felt it only in intermittent puffs, but the pine leaves, more sensitive, kept up a continuous murmur. Close about me — close enough, but not too close — stood the hills. At my back, filling the horizon in that direction, stretched an unbroken ridge, some hundreds of feet loftier than my own position, and several miles in length, up the almost perpendicular slope of which, a very rampart for steepness, ranks of evergreen trees were pushing in narrow file. Elsewhere the land rose in separate elevations; some of them, pale with distance, showing through a gap, or peeping over the shoulder of a less remote neighbor. Nothing else was in sight; and

there I sat alone, under the blue sky, — alone, yet with no lack of unobtrusive society.

At brief intervals a field sparrow somewhere down the hillside gave out a sweet and artless strain, clear as running water and soft as the breath of springtime. How gently it caressed the ear! The place and the day had found a voice. Once a grouse drummed, — one of the most restful of all natural sounds, to me at least, "drumming" though it be, speaking always of fair weather and woodsy quietness and peace; and once, to my surprise, I heard a clatter of crossbill notes, though I saw nothing of the birds, — restless souls, wanderers up and down the earth, and, after the habit of restless souls in general, gregarious to the last. A buzzard drifted across the sky. Like the swan on still St. Mary's Lake, he floated double, bird and shadow. A flicker shouted, and a chewink, under the sweet-fern and laurel bushes, stopped his scratching once in a while to address by name a mate or fellow traveler. A Canadian nuthatch, calling softly, hung back downward from a pine cone; and, nearer by, a solitary vireo sat

preening his feathers, with sweet soliloquistic chattering, "the very sound of happy thoughts." I was with him in feeling, though no match for him in the expression of it.

Again and again I took the brookside path, and spent an hour of dreams in this sunny clearing among the hills. Day by day the sun's heat did its work, melting the snow of the shadbushes and the bloodroot, and bringing out the first scattered flushes of yellowish-green on the lofty tulip-trees, while splashes of lively purple soon made me aware that the ground in some places was as thick with fringed polygala as it was in other places with hepatica and arbutus. No doubt, the fair procession, beauty following beauty, would last the season through. A white violet, new to me (*Viola striata*), was sprinkled along the path, and on the second day, as I went up the hill to my usual seat, I dropped upon my knees before a perfect vision of loveliness, — a dwarf iris, only two or three inches above the ground, of an exquisite, truly heavenly shade, bluish-purple or violet-blue, standing alone in the midst of the brown last year's grass. Un-

less it may have been by the cloudberry on Mount Clinton, I was never so taken captive by a blossom. I worshiped it in silence, — the grass a natural prayer-rug, — feeling all the while as if I were looking upon a flower just created. It would not be found in Gray, I told myself. But it was; and before many days, almost to my sorrow, it grew to be fairly common. Once I happened upon a white specimen, as to which, likewise, the Manual had been before me. New flowers are almost as rare as new thoughts.

It was amid the dead grass and rust-colored stones of this same hillside that I found, also, the velvety, pansy-like variety of the birdfoot violet, here and there a plant surrounded by its relatives of the more every-day sort. This was my first sight of it; but I saw it afterward at Natural Bridge, and again at Afton, from which I infer that it must be rather common in the mountain region of Virginia, notwithstanding Dr. Gray, who, as I now notice, speaks as if Maryland were its southern limit. Indeed, to judge from my hasty experience, Alleghanian Virginia is a thriving-place of the

violet family in general. In my very brief visit, I was too busy (or too idle, but my idleness was really of a busy complexion) to give the point as much attention as I now wish I had given to it, else I am sure I could furnish the particulars to bear out my statement. At Pulaski, without any thought of making a list, I remarked abundance of *Viola pedata*, *V. palmata*, and *V. sagittata*, with *V. pubescens*, *V. canina Muhlenbergii*, and four forms new to my eyes, — *V. pedata bicolor* and *V. striata*, just mentioned, *V. hastata* and *V. pubescens scabriuscula*. If to these be added *V. Canadensis* and *V. rostrata*, both of them common at Natural Bridge, we have at least a pretty good assortment to be picked up by a transient visitor, whose eyes, moreover, were oftener in the trees than on the ground.

My single white novelty, *V. striata*, grew in numbers under the maples in the grounds of the inn. The two yellow ones were found farther away, and were the means of more excitement. I had gone down the creek, one afternoon, to the neighborhood of the second furnace (two smelting-furnaces being, as

far as a stranger could judge, the main reason of the town's existence), and thence had taken a side-road that runs among the hills in the direction of Peak Knob, the highest point near Pulaski. A lucky misdirection, or misunderstanding, sent me too far to the right, and there my eye rested suddenly upon a bank covered with strange-looking yellow violets; like *pubescens* in their manner of growth, but noticeably different in the shape of the leaves, and noticeably not pubescent. A reference to the Manual, on my return to the hotel, showed them to be *V. hastata*, — "rare;" and that magic word, so inspiriting to all collectors, made it indispensable that I should visit the place again, with a view to additional specimens. The next morning it rained heavily, and the road, true to its Virginian character, was a discouragement to travel, a diabolical misconjunction of slipperiness and supreme adhesiveness; but I had come prepared for such difficulties, and anyhow, in vacation time and in a strange country, there was no staying all day within doors. I had gathered my specimens, of which, happily, there was no lack, and was wandering about under

an umbrella among the dripping bushes, seeing what I could see, thinking more of birds than of blossoms, when behold! I stumbled upon a second novelty, still another yellow violet, suggestive neither of *V. pubescens* nor of anything else that I had ever seen. It went into the box (I could find but two or three plants), and then I felt that it might rain never so hard, the day was saved.

A hurried reference to the Manual brought me no satisfaction, and I dispatched one of the plants forthwith to a friendly authority, for whom a comparison with herbarium specimens would supply any conceivable gaps in his own knowledge. "Here is something not described in Gray's Manual," I wrote to him, "unless," I added (not to be caught napping, if I could help it), "it be *V. pubescens scabriuscula*." And I made bold to say further, in my unscientific enthusiasm, that whatever the plant might or might not turn out to be, I did not believe it was properly to be considered as a variety of *V. pubescens*. In appearance and habit it was too unlike that familiar Massachusetts species. If he could see it growing, I was

persuaded he would be of the same opinion, though I was well enough aware of my entire unfitness for meddling with such high questions.

He replied at once, knowing the symptoms of collector's fever, it is to be presumed, and the value of a prompt treatment. The violet was *V. pubescens scabriuscula*, he said, — at least, it was the plant so designated by the Manual; but he went on to tell me, for my comfort, that some botanists accepted it as of specific rank, and that my own impression about it would very likely prove to be correct. Since then I have been glad to find this view of the question supported by Messrs. Britton and Brown in their new Illustrated Flora, where the plant is listed as *V. scabriuscula*. As to all of which it may be subjoined that the less a man knows, the prouder he feels at having made a good guess. It would be too bad if so common an evil as ignorance were not attended by some slight compensations.

These novelties in violets, so interesting to the finder, if to nobody else (though since the time here spoken of he has seen the "rare" *hastata* growing broadcast, literally

by the acre, in the woodlands of southwestern North Carolina), were gathered, as before said, not far from the foot of Peak Knob. From the moment of my arrival in Pulaski I had had my eye upon that eminence, the highest of the hills round about, looking to be, as I was told it was, a thousand feet above the valley level, or some three thousand feet above tide-water. I call it Peak Knob, but that was not the name I first heard for it. On the second afternoon of my stay I had gone through the town and over some shadeless fields beyond, following a crooked, hard-baked, deeply rutted road, till I found myself in a fine piece of old woods, — oaks, tulip-trees (poplars, the Southern people call them), black walnuts, and the like; leafless now, all of them, and silent as the grave, but certain a few days hence to be alive with wings and vocal with spring music. In imagination I was already beholding them populous with chats, indigo-birds, wood pewees, wood thrushes, and warblers (it is one of our ornithological pleasures to make such anticipatory catalogues in unfamiliar places), when my prophetic vision was interrupted by the ap-

proach of a cart, in which sat a man driving a pair of oxen by means of a single rope line. He stopped at once on being accosted, and we talked of this and that; the inquisitive traveler asking such questions as came into his head, and the wood-carter answering them one by one in a neighborly, unhurried spirit. Along with the rest of my interrogatories I inquired the name of the high mountain yonder, beyond the valley. "That is Peach Knob," he replied, — or so I understood him. "Peach Knob?" said I. "Why is that? Because of the peaches raised there?" "No, they just *call* it that," he answered; but he added, as an afterthought, that there *were* some peach orchards, he believed, on the southern slope. Perhaps he had said "Peak Knob," and was too polite to correct a stranger's hardness of hearing. At all events, the mountain appeared to be generally known by that more reasonable-sounding if somewhat tautological appellation.

By whatever name it should be called, I was on my way to scale it when I found the roadside bright with hastate-leaved violets, as before described. My mistaken course,

and some ill-considered attempts I made to correct the same by striking across lots, took me so far out of the way, and so much increased the labor of the ascent, that the afternoon was already growing short when I reached the crest of the ridge below the actual peak, or knob; and as my mood was not of the most ambitious, and the clouds had begun threatening rain, I gave over the climb at that point, and sat down on the edge of the ridge, having the wood behind me, to regain my breath and enjoy the landscape.

A little below, on the knolls halfway up the mountain, was a settlement of colored mountaineers, a dozen or so of scattered houses, each surrounded by a garden and orchard patch, — apple-trees, cherry-trees, and a few peach-trees, with currant and gooseberry bushes; a really thrifty-seeming alpine hamlet, with a maze of winding by-paths and half-worn carriage-roads making down from it to the highway below. With or without reason, it struck me as a thing to be surprised at, this colony of black highlanders.

The distance was all a grand confusion of

mountains, one crowding another on the horizon; some nearer, some farther away, with one lofty and massive peak in the northeast lording it over the rest. Close at hand in the valley, at my left, lay the city of Pulaski, with its furnaces, — a mile or two apart, having a stretch of open country between, — its lazy creek, and its multitudinous churches. A Pulaskian would find it hard to miss of heaven, it seemed to me. Everywhere else the foreground was a grassy, pastoral country, broken by occasional patches of leafless woods, and showing here and there a solitary house, — a scene widely unlike that from any Massachusetts mountain of anything near the same altitude. Hereabout (and one reads the same story in traveling over the State) men do not huddle together in towns, and get their bread by making things in factories, but are still mostly tillers of the soil, planters and graziers, with elbow-room and breathing-space. The more cities and villages, the more woods, — such appears to be the law. In Massachusetts there are six or seven times as many inhabitants to the square mile as there are in Virginia; yet Massachusetts seen from

its hilltops is all a forest, and Virginia a cleared country.

Rain began falling by the time the valley was reached, on my return, and coming to a store in the vicinity of the lower furnace, — the one store of that suburb, so far as I could discover, — I stepped inside, partly for shelter, partly to see the people at their Saturday shopping. A glance at the walls and the show-cases made it plain that one store was enough. You had only to ask for what you wanted: a shotgun, a revolver, a violin case, a shovel, a plug of tobacco, a pound of sugar, a coffee-pot, a dress pattern, a ribbon, a necktie, a pair of trousers, or what not. The merchant might have written over his door, "Humani nihil alienum;" if he had been a city shopkeeper, he might even have called his establishment a department store, and filled the Sunday newspapers with the wonders of it. Then it would have been but a step to the governor's chair, or possibly to a seat in the national council.

The place was like a beehive; customers of both sexes and both colors going and coming with a ceaseless buzz of gossip and

bargaining, while the proprietor and his clerks — two of them smoking cigarettes — bustled to and fro behind the counters, improving the shining hour. One strapping young colored man standing near me inquired for suspenders, and, on having an assortment placed before him, selected without hesitation (it is a good customer who knows his own mind) a brilliant yellow pair embroidered or edged with equally brilliant red. Having bought them, at an outlay of twelve cents, he proceeded to the piazza, where he took off his coat and put them on. That was what he had bought them for. His taste was impressionistic, I thought. He believed in the primary colors. And why quarrel with him? "Dear child of Nature, let them rail," I was ready to say. It is not Mother Nature, but Dame Fashion, another person altogether, and a most ridiculous old body, who prescribes that masculine humanity shall never consider itself "dressed" except in funereal black and white.

What Nature herself thinks of colors, and what freedom she uses in mixing them, was to be newly impressed upon me this very

afternoon, on my walk homeward. In a wet place near the edge of the woods, at some distance from the road, — so sticky after the rain that I was thankful to keep away from it, — I came suddenly upon a truly magnificent display of Virginia lungwort, a flower that I half remembered to have seen at one time and another in gardens, but here growing in a garden of its own, and after a manner to put cultivation to the blush. The homely place, nothing but the muddy border of a pool, was glorified by it; the flowers a vivid blue or bluish-purple, and the buds bright pink. The plants are of a weedy sort, little to my fancy, and the blossoms, taken by themselves, are not to be compared for an instant with such modest woodland beauties as were spoken of a few pages back, trailing arbutus, fringed polygala, and the vernal fleur-de-lis; but the color, seen thus in the mass, and come upon thus unexpectedly, was a memorable piece of splendor. Such pictures, humble as they may seem, and little as they may be regarded at the time, are often among the best rewards of travel. Memory has ways of her own, and treasures what trifles she will.

And with another of her trifles let me be done with this part of my story. There was still the end of the afternoon to spare, and, the rain being over, I skirted the woods, walking and standing still by turns, till all at once out of a thicket just before me came the voice of a bird, — a brown thrasher, I took it to be, — running over his song in the very smallest of undertones; phrase after phrase, each with its natural emphasis and cadence, but all barely audible, though the singer could be only a few feet away. It was wonderful, the beauty of the muted voice and the fluency and perfection of the tune. The music ceased; and then, after a moment, I heard, several times repeated, still only a breath of sound, the mew of a catbird. With that I drew a step or two nearer, and there the bird sat, motionless and demure, as if music and a listener were things equally remote from his consciousness. What was in his thoughts I know not. He may have been tuning up, simply, making sure of his technique, rehearsing upon a dumb keyboard. Possibly, as men and women do, he had sung without knowing it, — dreaming of a last year's mate or of sum-

mer days coming, — or out of mere comfortable vacancy of mind. Catbirds are not among my dearest favorites; a little too fussy, somewhat too well aware of themselves, I generally think; more than a little too fragmentary in their effusions, beginning and beginning, and never getting under way, like an improviser who cannot find his theme; but this bird in the Alleghanies sang as bewitching a song as my ears ever listened to.

II

My spring campaign in Virginia was planned in the spirit of the old war-time bulletin, "All quiet on the Potomac;" happiness was to be its end, and idleness its means; and so far, at least, as my stay at Pulaski was concerned, this peaceful design was well carried out. There was nothing there to induce excessive activity: no glorious mountain summit whose daily beckoning must sooner or later be heeded; no long forest roads of the kind that will not let a man's imagination alone till he has seen the end of them. The town itself is small

and compact, so that it was no great jaunt to get away from it, and such woods as especially invited exploration lay close at hand. In short, it was a place where even a walking naturalist found it easy to go slowly, and to spend a due share of every day in sitting still, which latter occupation, so it be engaged in neither upon a piazza nor on a lawn, is one of the best uses of those fullest parts of a busy man's life, his so-called vacations.

The measure of my indolence may be estimated from the fact that the one really picturesque road in the neighborhood was left undiscovered till nearly the last day of my sojourn. It takes its departure from the village[1] within a quarter of a mile of the hotel, and the friendly manager of the house, who seemed himself to have some idea of such pleasures as I was in quest of, commended its charms to me very shortly after my arrival. So I recollected afterward, but

[1] Pulaski, or Pulaski City (the place goes by both names, — the second a reminiscence of its "booming" days, I should suppose), is so intermediate in size and appearance that I find myself speaking of it by turns as village, town, and city, with no thought of inconsistency or special inappropriateness.

for the time I somehow allowed the significance of his words to escape me, else I should, no doubt, have traveled the road again and again. As things were, I spent but a single forenoon upon it, and went only as far as the "height of land."

The mountain road, as the townspeople call it, runs over the long ridge which fills the horizon east of Pulaski, and down into the valley on the other side. It has its beginning, at least, in a gap similar in all respects to the one, some half a mile to the northward, into which I had so many times followed a footpath, as already fully set forth. The traveler has first to pass half a dozen or more of cabins, where, if he is a stranger, he will probably find himself watched out of sight with flattering unanimity by the curious inmates. In my time, at all events, a solitary foot-passenger seemed to be regarded as nothing short of a phenomenon. What was more agreeable, I met here a little procession of happy-looking black children returning to the town loaded with big branches of flowering apple-trees; a sight which for some reason put me in mind of a child, a tiny thing, — a

veritable pickaninny, — whom I had passed, some years before, near Tallahassee, and who pleased me by exclaiming to a companion, as a dove cooed in the distance, "Listen dat mournin' dove!" I wondered whether such children, living nearer to nature than some of us, might not be peculiarly susceptible to natural sights and sounds.

Before one of the last cabins stood three white children, and as they gazed at me fixedly I wished them "Good-morning;" but they stared and answered nothing. Then, when I had passed, a woman's sharp voice called from within, "Why don't you speak when anybody speaks to you? I'd have some manners, if I was you." And I perceived that if the boys and girls were growing up in rustic diffidence (not the most ill-mannered condition in the world, by any means), it was not for lack of careful maternal instruction.

This gap, like its fellow, had its own brook, which after a time the road left on one side and began climbing the mountain by a steeper and more direct course than the water had followed. Here were more of the rare hastate-leaved violets, and another

bunch of the barren strawberry, with hepatica, fringed polygala, mitrewort, bloodroot, and a pretty show of a remarkably large and handsome chickweed, of which I had seen much also in other places, — *Stellaria pubera*, or "great chickweed," as I made it out.

I was admiring these lowly beauties as I idled along (there was little else to admire just then, the wood being scrubby and the ground lately burned over), when I came to a standstill at the sound of a strange song from the bushy hillside a few paces behind me. The bird, whatever it was, had let me go by, — as birds so often do, — and then had broken out into music. I turned back at once, and made short work of the mystery, — a worm-eating warbler. Thanks to the fire, there was no cover for it, had it desired any. I had seen a bird of the same species a few days previously on the opposite side of the town, — looking like a red-eyed vireo rigged out with a fanciful striped head-dress, — and sixteen years before I had fallen in with a few specimens in the District of Columbia, but this was my first hearing of the song. The queer little crea-

ture was picking about the ground, feeding, but every minute or two mounted some low perch, — a few inches seemed to satisfy its ambition, — and delivered itself of a simple, short trill, similar to the pine warbler's for length and form, but in a guttural voice decidedly unlike the pine warbler's clear, musical whistle. It was not a very pleasing song, in itself considered, but I was very much pleased to hear it; for let the worldly-minded say what they will, a new bird-song is an event. With a single exception, it was the only new one, I believe, of my Virginia trip.

The worm-eating warbler, it may be worth while to add, is one of the less widely known members of its numerous family; plainness itself in its appearance, save for its showy cap, and very lowly and sedate in its habits. The few that I have ever had sight of, perhaps a dozen in all, have been on the ground or close to it, though one, I remember, was traveling about the lower part of a tree-trunk after the manner of a black-and-white creeper; and all observers, so far as I know, agree in pronouncing the song an exceptionally meagre and dry affair. Ordinarily it

has been likened to that of the chipper, but my bird had nothing like the chipper's gift of continuance.

This worm-eater's song must count as the best ornithological incident of the forenoon, since nothing else is quite so good as absolute novelty; but I was glad also to see for the first time hereabouts four commoner birds, — the pileated woodpecker, the sapsucker (yellow-bellied woodpecker), the rose-breasted grosbeak, and the black-throated blue warbler. I had undertaken a local list, of course, — a lazier kind of collecting, — and so was thankful for small favors. In the way of putting a shine upon common things the collecting spirit is second only to genius. I was glad to *see* them, I say; but, to be exact, I saw only three out of the four. The big woodpecker was heard, not seen. And while I stood still, hoping that he would repeat himself, and possibly show himself, I heard a chorus of crossbill notes, — like the cries of barnyard chickens a few weeks old, — and, looking up, descried the authors of them, a flock of ten birds flying across the valley. They were not new, even to my Pulaski notebook, but they

gave me, for all that, an exhilarating sensation of unexpectedness. Crossbills are associated in my mind with Massachusetts winters and New Hampshire summers and autumns. On the 30th of April, and in southwestern Virginia, — a long way from New Hampshire to the mind of a creature whose handiest mode of locomotion is by rail, — they seemed out of place and out of season; the more so because, to the best of my knowledge, there were no very high mountains or extensive coniferous forests anywhere in the neighborhood. However, my sensation of surprise, agreeable though it was, and therefore not to be regretted, had, on reflection, no very good reason to give for itself. Crossbills are a kind of gypsies among birds, and one ought not to be astonished, I suppose, at meeting them almost anywhere. Some days after this (May 12), in the national cemetery at Arlington (across the Potomac from Washington), I glanced up into a low spruce-tree in response to the call of an orchard oriole, and there, at work upon the cones, hung a flock of five crossbills, three of them in red plumage. They were feeding, and had no

thought of doing anything else. For the half-hour that I stayed by them — some other interesting birds, a true migratory wave, in fact, being near at hand — they remained in that treetop without uttering a syllable; and two hours later, when I came down the same path again, they had moved but two trees away, and were still eating in silence, paying absolutely no heed to me as I walked under them. Many kinds of northward-bound migrants were in the cemetery woods. Perhaps these ravenous crossbills[1] were of the party. I took them for stragglers, at any rate, not remembering at the time that birds of their sort are believed to have bred, at least in one instance, within the District of Columbia. Probably they *were* stragglers, but whether from the forests of the North or from the peaks of the southern Alleghanies is of course a point beyond my ken.

So far as our present knowledge of them goes, crossbills seem in a peculiar sense to

[1] Mr. H. W. Henshaw once told me about a flock that appeared in winter in the grounds of the Smithsonian Institution, so exhausted that they could be picked off the trees like apples.

be a law unto themselves. In northern New England they are said to lay their eggs in late winter or early spring, when the temperature is liable, or even certain, to run many degrees below zero. Yet, if the notion takes them, a pair will raise a brood in Massachusetts or in Maryland in the middle of May; which strikes me, I am bound to say, as a far more reasonable and Christian-like proceeding. And the same erratic quality pertains to their ordinary, every-day behavior. Even their simplest flight from one hill to another, as I witnessed it here in Virginia, for example, has an air of being all a matter of chance. Now they tack to the right, now to the left, now in close order, now every one for himself; no member of the flock appearing to know just how the course lies, and all hands calling incessantly, as the only means of coming into port together.

When I spoke just now of the worm-eating warbler's song as almost the only new one heard in Virginia, I ought perhaps to have guarded my words. I meant to say that the worm-eater was almost the only species that I there heard sing for the first

time, — a somewhat different matter; for new songs, happily, — songs new to the individual listener, — are by no means so infrequent as the songs of new birds. On the very forenoon of which I am now writing, I heard another strain that was every whit as novel to my ear as the worm-eater's, — as novel, indeed, as if it had been the work of some bird from the other side of the planet. Again and again it was given out, at tantalizing intervals, and I could not so much as guess at the identity of the singer; partly, it may be, because of the feverish anxiety I was in lest he should get away from me in that endless mountain-side forest. Every repetition I thought would be the last, and the bird gone forever. Finally, as I edged nearer and nearer, half a step at once, with infinite precaution, I caught a glimpse of a chickadee. A chickadee! Could he be doing that? Yes; for I watched him, and saw it done. And these were the notes, or the best that my pencil could make of them: *twee*, *twee*, *twee* (very quick), *twitty*, *twitty*, — the first measure in a thin, wire-drawn tone, the second a full, clear whistle. Sometimes the three *twees* were slurred almost

into one. Altogether, the effect was most singular. I had never heard anything in the least resembling it, familiar as I had thought myself for some years with the normal four-syllabled song of *Parus carolinensis*. For the moment I was half disposed to be angry, — so much excitement, and so absurd an outcome; but on the whole it is very good fun to be fooled in this way by a bird who happens to have invented a tune of his own. Besides, we are all believers in originality, — are we not? — whatever our own practice.

Human travelers were infrequent enough to be little more than a welcome diversion: two young men on horseback; a solitary foot-passenger, who kindly pointed out a trail by which a long elbow in the road could be saved on the descent; and, near the top of the mountain, a four-horse cart, the driver of which was riding one of the wheel-horses. At the summit I chose a seat (not the first one of the jaunt, by any means) and surveyed the valley beyond. It lay directly at my feet, the mountain dropping to it almost at a bound, and the stunted budding trees offered the least possible ob-

struction to the view. Narrow as the valley was, there was nothing else to be seen in that direction. Immediately behind it dense clouds hung so low that from my altitude there was no looking under them. In one respect it was better so, as sometimes, for the undistracted enjoyment of it, a single painting is better than a gallery.

There was nothing peculiar or striking in the scene, nothing in the slightest degree romantic or extraordinary: a common patch of earth, without so much as the play of sunlight and shadow to set it off; a pretty valley, closely shut in between a mountain and a cloud; a quiet, grassy place, fenced into small farms, the few scattered houses, perhaps half a dozen, each with its cluster of outbuildings and its orchard of blossoming fruit-trees. Here and there cattle were grazing, guinea fowls were calling *potrack* in tones which not even the magic of distance could render musical, and once the loud baa of a sheep came all the way up the mountain side. If the best reward of climbing be to look afar off, the next best is to look down thus into a tiny valley of a world. In either case, the gazer must take time enough, and

be free enough in his spirit, to become a part of what he sees. Then he may hope to carry something of it home with him.

It was soon after quitting the summit, on my return, — for I left the valley a picture (I can see it yet), and turned back by the way I had come, — that I fell in with the grosbeaks before alluded to: a single taciturn female with two handsome males in devoted and tuneful attendance upon her. Happy creature! Among birds, so far as I have ever been able to gather, the gentler and more backward sex have never to wait for admirers. Their only anxiety lies in choosing one rather than another. That, no doubt, must be sometimes a trouble, since, as this imperfect world is constituted, choice includes rejection.

The law is general. Even in the modern pastime which we dignify as the "observation of nature" there is no evading it. If we see one thing, we for that reason are blind to another. I had ascended this mountain road at a snail's pace, never walking many rods together without a halt, — whatever was to be seen, I meant to see it; yet now, on my way down, my eyes fell all

at once upon a bank thickly set with plants quite unknown to me. There they stood, in all the charms of novelty, waiting to be discovered: low shrubs, perhaps two feet in height, of a very odd appearance, — not conspicuous, exactly, but decidedly noticeable, — covered with drooping racemes of small chocolate-colored flowers. They were directly upon the roadside. With half an eye, a man would have found it hard work to miss them. "The observation of nature"! Verily it is a great study, and its devotees acquire an amazing sharpness of vision. How many other things, equally strange and interesting, had I left unseen, both going and coming? I ought perhaps to have been surprised and humiliated by such an experience; but I cannot say that either emotion was what could be called poignant. I have been living with myself for a good many years; and besides, as was remarked just now, all our doings are under the universal law of selection and exclusion. On the whole, I am glad of it. Life will relish the longer for our not finding everything at once.

The identity of the shrub was quickly

made out, the vivid yellow of the inner bark furnishing a clue which spared me the labor of a formal "analysis." It was *Xanthorrhiza apiifolia*, shrub yellow-root, — a name long familiar to my eye from having been read so many times in turning the leaves of the Manual, on one hunt and another. With a new song and a new flowering plant, the mountain road had used me pretty well, after all my neglect of it.

My one new bird at Pulaski — and the only one seen in Virginia — was stumbled upon in a grassy field on the farther border of the town. I had set out to spend an hour or two in a small wood beyond the brickyard, and was cutting the corner of a field by a footpath, still feeling myself in the city, and not yet on the alert, when a bird flew up before me, crossed the street, and dropped on the other side of the wall. Half seen as it was, its appearance suggested nothing in particular; but it seemed not to be an English sparrow, — too common here, as it is getting to be everywhere, — and of course it might be worth attention. It is one capital advantage of being away from home that we take additional encouragement to investigate

whatever falls in our way. Before I could get to the wall, however, the bird rose, along with two or three Britishers, and perched before me in a thorn-bush. Then I saw at a glance that it must be a lark sparrow (*Chondestes*). With those magnificent headstripes it could hardly be anything else. What a prince it looked! — a prince in most ignoble company. It would have held its rank even among white-crowns, of which it made me think not only by its head-markings, but by its general color and — what was perhaps only the same thing — a certain cleanness of aspect. Presently it flew back to the field out of which I had frightened it; and there in the short grass it continued feeding for a long half-hour, while I stood, glass in hand, ogling it, and making penciled notes of its plumage, point by point, for comparison with Dr. Coues's description after I should return to the inn. I was almost directly under the windows of a house, — of a Sunday afternoon, — but that did not matter. Two or three carriages passed along the street, but I let them go. A new bird is a new bird. And it must be admitted that neither the occupants of the

house nor the people in the carriages betrayed the slightest curiosity as to my unconventional behavior. The bird, for its part, minded me little more. It was engrossed with its dinner, and uttered no sound beyond two or three *tseeps*, in which I could recognize nothing distinctive. Its silence was a disappointment; and since I could not waste the afternoon in watching a bird, no matter how new and handsome, that would do nothing but eat grass seed (or something else), I finally took the road again and passed on. I did not see it afterward, though, under fresh accessions of curiosity, and for the chance of hearing it sing, I went in search of it twice.

From a reference to Dr. Rives's Catalogue of the Birds of the Virginias, which I had brought with me, I learned, what I thought I knew already, that the lark sparrow, abundantly at home in the interior of North America, is merely an accidental visitor in Virginia. The only records cited by Dr. Rives are those of two specimens, one captured, the other seen, in and near Washington. It seemed like a perversity of fate that I, hardly more than an accidental visitor my-

self, should be shown a bird which Dr. Rives — the ornithologist of the state, we may fairly call him — had never seen within the state limits. But it was not for me to complain; and for that matter, it is nothing new to say that it takes a green hand to make discoveries. I knew a man, only a few years ago, who, one season, was so uninstructed that he called me out to see a Henslow's bunting, which proved to be a song sparrow; but the very next year he found a snowbird summering a few miles from Boston (there was no mistake this time), — a thing utterly without precedent. In the same way, I knew of one lad who discovered a brown thrasher wintering in Massachusetts, the only recorded instance; and of another who went to an ornithologist of experience begging him to come into the woods and see a most wonderful many-colored bird, which turned out, to the experienced man's astonishment, to be nothing less rare than a nonpareil bunting! Providence favors the beginner, or so it seems; and the beginner, on his part, is prepared to be favored, because to him everything is worth looking at.

Dr. Rives's catalogue helped me to a some-

what lively interest in another bird, one so much an old story to me for many years that of itself its presence or absence here would scarcely have received a second thought. I speak of the blue golden-winged warbler. It is common in Massachusetts, — in that part of it, at least, where I happen to live, — and I have found it abundant in eastern Tennessee. That it should be at home here in southwestern Virginia, so near the Tennessee line and in a country so well adapted to its tastes, would have appeared to me the most natural thing in the world. But when I had noted my first specimens — on this same Sunday afternoon — and was back at the hotel, I took up the catalogue to check the name ; and there I found the bird entered as a rare migrant, with only one record of its capture in Virginia proper, and that near Washington. Dr. Rives had never met with it!

This was on the 28th of April. Two days later I noticed one or two more, — probably two, but there was no certainty that I had not run upon the same bird twice ; and on the morning of May 1, in a last hurried visit to the woods, I saw two together. All were

males in full plumage, and one of the last two was singing. The warbler migration was just coming on, and I could not help believing that with a little time blue golden-wings would grow to be fairly numerous. That, of course, was matter of conjecture. I found no sign of the species at Natural Bridge, which is about a hundred miles from Pulaski in a northeasterly direction. In Massachusetts this beautiful warbler's distribution is decidedly local, and its commonness is believed to have increased greatly in the last twenty years. Possibly the same may be true in Virginia. Possibly, too, my seeing of five or six specimens, on opposite sides of the city, was nothing but a happy chance, and my inference from it a pure delusion.

I have implied that the warbler migration was approaching its height on the 1st of May. In point of fact, however, the brevity of my visit — and perhaps also its date, neither quite early enough nor quite late enough — rendered it impossible for me to gather much as to the course of this always interesting movement, or even to understand the significance of the little of it that came under

my eye. My first day's walks — very short and altogether at haphazard, and that of the afternoon as good as thrown away — showed but three species of warblers; an anomalous state of things, especially as two of the birds were the oven-bird and the golden warbler, neither of them to be reckoned among the early comers of the family. The next day I saw six other species, including such prompt ones as the pine-creeper and the myrtle bird, and such a comparatively tardy one as the Blackburnian. On the 26th three additional names were listed, — the blue yellow-back, the chestnut-side, and the worm-eater. Not until the fourth day was anything seen or heard of the black-throated green. This fact of itself would establish the worthlessness of any conclusions that might be drawn from the progress of events as I had noted them.

On the 28th, when my first blue golden-wings made their appearance, there were present also in the same place three palm warblers, — my only meeting with them in Virginia, where Dr. Rives marks them "not common." With them, or in the same small wood, were a group of silent red-eyed vireos,

several yellow-throated vireos, also silent, myrtle birds, one or two Blackburnians, one or two chestnut-sides, two or three redstarts, and one oven-bird, with black-and-white creepers, and something like a flock (a rare sight for me) of white-breasted nuthatches, — a typical body of migrants, to which may be added, though less clearly members of the same party, tufted titmice, Carolina chickadees, white-throated sparrows, Carolina doves, flickers, downy woodpeckers, and brown thrashers.

It is a curious circumstance, universally observed, that warblers, with a few partial exceptions, — blackpolls and myrtle birds especially, — travel thus in mixed companies ; so that a flock of twenty birds may be found to contain representatives of six, eight, or ten species. Whatever its explanation, the habit is one to be thankful for from the field student's point of view. The pleasurable excitement which the semi-annual warbler movement affords him is at least several times greater than it could be if each species made the journey by itself. Every observer must have realized, for example, how comparatively uninteresting the blackpoll migra-

tion is, particularly in the autumn. Comparatively uninteresting, I say; for even with the birch-trees swarming with blackpolls, each exactly like its fellow, the hope, slight as it may be, of lighting upon a stray baybreast among them may encourage a man to keep up his scrutiny, leveling his glass upon bird after bird, looking for a dash of telltale color along the flanks, till at last he says, "Nothing but blackpolls," and turns away in search of more stirring adventures.

Students of natural history, like less favored people, should cultivate philosophy; and the primary lesson of philosophy is to make the best of things as they are. If an expected bird fails us, we are not therefore without resources and compensations; we may be interested in the fact of its absence; and so long as we are interested, though it be only in the endurance of privation, life has still something left for us. Herein, in part, lies the value to the traveling student of a local list of the things in his own line. It enables him to keep in view what he is missing, and so to increase the sum of his sensations. One of my surprises at Pulaski (and a surprise is better than nothing, even

if it be on the wrong side of the account) was the absence of the phœbe, — "almost everywhere a common summer resident," says Dr. Rives. Another unexpected thing was the absence of the white-eyed vireo, — also a "common summer resident," — for which portions of the surrounding country seemed to be admirably suited. I should have thought, too, that Carolina wrens would have been here, — a pair or two, at least. As it was, Bewick seemed to have the field mostly to himself, although a house wren was singing on the morning of May 1, and I have already mentioned a winter wren which was seen on three or four occasions. He, however, may be assumed to have taken his departure northward (or southward) very soon after my final sight of him. Thrashers and catbirds are wrens, I know, — though I doubt whether *they* know it, — but it has not yet become natural for me to speak of them under that designation. The mocking-bird, another big wren, I did not find here, nor had I supposed myself likely to do so. Robins were common, I was glad to see, — one pair were building a nest in the vines of the hotel veranda, — and several pairs of

song sparrows appeared to have established themselves along the banks of the creek north of the city. I saw them nowhere else. One need not go much beyond Virginia to find these omnipresent New Englanders endowed with all the attractions of rarity.

Two or three spotted sandpipers about the stony bed of the creek (a dribbling stream at present, though within a month or so it had carried away bridges and set houses adrift), and a few killdeer plovers there and in the dry fields beyond, were the only water birds seen at Pulaski. One of the killdeers gave me a pretty display of what I took to be his antics as a wooer. I was returning over the grassy hills, where on the way out a colored boy's dog in advance of me had stirred up several killdeers, when suddenly I heard a strange humming noise, — a sort of double-tonguing, I called it to myself, — and very soon recognized in it, as I thought, something of the killdeer's vocal quality. Sure enough, as I drew near the place I found the fellow in the midst of a real lover's ecstasy; his tail straight in the air, fully spread (the value of the bright cinnamon-colored rump and tail feathers

being at once apparent), and he spinning round like a dervish, almost as if standing on his head (it was a wonder how he did it), all the while emitting that quick throbbing whistle. His mate (that was, or was to be) maintained an air of perfect indifference, — maidenly reserve it might have been called, for aught I know, by a spectator possessed of a charitable imagination, — as female birds generally do in such cases; unless, as often happens, they repel their adorers with beak and claw. I have seen courtships that looked more ridiculous, because more human-like, — the flicker's, for example, — but never a crazier one, or one less describable. In the language of the boards, it was a star performance.

The same birds amused me at another time by their senseless conduct in the stony margins of the creek, where they had taken refuge when I pressed them too nearly. There they squatted close among the pebbles, as other plovers do, till it was all but impossible to tell feather from stone, though I had watched the whole proceeding; yet while they stood thus motionless and practically invisible (no cinnamon color in sight, now!),

they could not for their lives keep their tongues still, but every little while uttered loud, characteristic cries. Their behavior was a mixture of shrewdness and stupidity such as even human beings would have been hard put to it to surpass.

Swallows were scarce, almost of course. A few pairs of rough-wings were most likely at home in the city or near it, and more than once two or three barn swallows were noticed hawking up and down the creek. There was small prospect of their settling hereabout, from any indications that I could discover. Chimney swifts, happily, were better provided for; pretty good substitutes for swallows, — so good, indeed, that people in general do not know the difference. And even an ornithologist may be glad to confess that the rarity of swallows throughout the Alleghanies is not an unmitigated misfortune, if it be connected in any way with the immunity of the same region from the plague of mosquitoes. It would be difficult to exaggerate the luxury to a dreaming naturalist, used to New England forests, of woods in which he can lounge at his ease, in warm weather, with no mosquito, black fly, or

midge — "more formidable than wolves," as Thoreau says — to disturb his meditations.

By far the most characteristic birds of the city were the Bewick wrens, of whose town-loving habits I have already spoken. Constantly as I heard them, I could never become accustomed to the unwrennish character of their music. Again and again, when the bird happened to be a little way off, so that only the concluding measure of his tune reached me, I caught myself thinking of him as a song sparrow. If I had been in Massachusetts, I should certainly have passed on without a suspicion of the truth.

The tall old rock maples in the hotel yard — decaying at the tops — were occupied by a colony of bronzed grackles, busy and noisy from morning till night; excellent company, as they stalked about the lawn under my windows. In the same trees a gorgeous Baltimore oriole whistled for three or four days, and once I heard there a warbling vireo. Neither oriole nor vireo was detected elsewhere.

Of my seventy-five Pulaski species (April 24–May 1), eighteen were warblers and fifteen belonged to the sparrow-finch family.

Six of the seventy-five names were added in a bunch at the very last moment, making me think with lively regret how much more respectable my list would be if I could remain a week or two longer. With my trunk packed and everything ready for my departure, I ran out once more to the border of the woods, at the point where I had first entered them a week before; and there, in the trees and shrubbery along the brookside path, I found myself all at once surrounded by a most interesting bevy of fresh arrivals, among which a hurried investigation disclosed a scarlet tanager, a humming-bird, a house wren, a chat, a wood pewee, and a Louisiana water thrush. The pewee was calling and the house wren singing (an unspeakable convenience when a man has but ten minutes in which to take the census of a thicket full of birds), and the water thrush, as he flew up the stream, keeping just ahead of me among the rhododendrons, stopped every few minutes to sing his prettiest, as if he were overjoyed to be once more at home after a winter's absence. I did not wonder at his happiness. The spot had been made for him. I was as sorry to leave it, perhaps, as he was glad to get back to it.

And while I followed the water thrush, Bruce, the hotel collie, my true friend of a week, whose frequent companionship on the mountain road and elsewhere has been too much ignored, was having a livelier chase on his own account, — a chase which I found time to enjoy, for the minute that it lasted, in spite of my preoccupation. He had stolen out of the house by a back door, and followed me to the woods without an invitation, — though he might have had one, since, being non-ornithological in his pursuits, he was never in the way, — and now was thrown into a sudden frenzy by the starting up before him of a rabbit. Hearing his bark, I turned about in season to see the two creatures going at lightning speed up the hillside, the rabbit's "cotton tail" (a fine "mark of direction," as naturalists say) immediately in front of the collie's nose. Once the rabbit ran plump into a log, and for an instant was fairly off its legs. I trembled for its safety; but it recovered itself, and in a moment more disappeared from view. Then after a few minutes Bruce came back, panting. It had been a great morning for him as well as for me, — a morning

to haunt his after-dinner dreams, and set his legs twitching, for a week to come. I hope he has found many another walking guest and "fellow woodlander" since then, with whom to enjoy the pleasures of the road and the excitement of the chase.

For myself, there was no leisure for sentiment. I posted back to the inn on the run, and only after boarding the train was able to make a minute of the good things which the rim of the forest had shown me.

It was quite as well so. With prudent forethought, my farewell to the brook path and the clearing at the head of it had been taken the afternoon before. Here, again, Fortune smiled upon me. After three days of cloudiness and rain the sun was once more shining, and I took my usual seat on the dry grassy knoll among the rusty boulders for a last look at the world about me, — this peaceful, sequestered nook in the Alleghanies, into which by so happy a chance I had wandered on my first morning in Virginia. (How well I remembered the years when Virginia was anything but an abode of quietness!) The arbutus was still in plentiful bloom, and the dwarf fleur-de-

lis also. On my way up the slope I had stopped to admire a close bunch of a dozen blossoms. The same soft breeze was blowing, and the same field sparrow chanting. Yes, and the same buzzard floated overhead and dropped the same moving shadow upon the hillside. Now a prairie warbler sang or a hyla peeped, but mostly the air was silent, except for the murmur of pine needles and the faint rustling of dry oak leaves. And all around me stood the hills, the nearest of them, to-day, blue with haze.

For a while I went farther up the slope, to a spot where I could look through a break in the circle and out upon the world. In one direction were green fields and blossoming apple-trees, and beyond them, of course, a wilderness of mountains. But I returned soon to my lower seat. It was pleasanter there, where I was quite shut in. The ground about me was sprinkled with low azalea bushes, unnoticed a week ago, now brightening with clustered pink buds. What a picture the hill would make a few days hence, and again, later still, when the laurel should come into its glory!

Parting is sweet pain. It must be a

mark of inferiority, I suppose, to be fonder of places than of persons, — as cats are inferior to dogs. But then, on a vacation one *goes* to see places. And right or wrong, so it was. Kindly as the hotel people had treated me, — and none could have been kinder or more efficient, — there was nothing in Pulaski that I left with half so much regret, or have remembered half so often, as this hollow among the hills, wherein a man could look and listen and be quiet, with no thought of anything new or strange, contented for the time with the old thoughts and the old dreams.

AT NATURAL BRIDGE

I

With the exception of a tedious delay at East Radford it was a very enjoyable forenoon's ride from Pulaski to Natural Bridge, through a country everywhere interesting, and for much of the distance gloriously wild and beautiful. Splendid hillside patches of mingled Judas-tree and flowering dogwood — one of a bright peach-bloom color, the other royal masses of pure white — brightened parts of the way south of Roanoke. There, also, hovering over a grassy field, were the first bobolinks of the season. From Buchanan northward (new ground to me by daylight) we had the company of mountains and the James River, the road following the windings of a narrow bank between the base of the ridge and the water. It surprised me to see the James so large and full at such a distance from its mouth,

— almost as wide, I thought, as the Tennessee at Chattanooga. Shortly before reaching the Natural Bridge station the train stopped for water, and on getting off the steps of the car I heard a Maryland yellow-throat singing just below me at the foot of the bank, and in a minute more a kingfisher flew across the stream, — two additional names for my vacation catalogue. Then, while I waited at the station for a carriage from the hotel, — two miles and a half away, — I added still another. In the cloudy sky, between me and the sun, was a bird which in that blinding light might have passed for a buzzard, only that a swallow was pursuing it. Seeing that sign, I raised my glass and found the bird a fish-hawk. Trifles these things were, perhaps, with mountains and a river in sight; but that depends upon one's scale of values. To me it is not so clear that a pile of earth is more an object of wonder than a swallow that soars above it; and for better or worse, mountains or no mountains, I kept an ornithological eye open.

On the way to the Bridge (myself the only passenger) the colored driver of the

wagon picked up a brother of his own race, who happened to be traveling in the same direction and was thankful for a lift. And a real amusement and pleasure it was to listen to the two men's palaver, especially to their "Mistering" of each other at every turn of the dialogue. I never saw two schoolmasters, even, who could do more in half an hour for the maintenance and increase of their mutual dignity. It was "Mr. Brown" and "Mr. Smith" with every other breath, until the second man was set down at his own gate. From their appearance they must have been of an age to remember the days "before the war," and I did not think it surprising that men who had once been pieces of property should be disposed to make the most of their present condition of manhood, and so to give and take, between themselves, as many reminders and tokens of it as the brevity of their remaining time would permit.

Once at the hotel, installed (literally) in my little room, the only window of which was in the door, — opening upon the piazza, for all the world as a prison cell opens upon its corridor, — once domiciled, I say, and a

bite taken, I bought a season ticket of admission to the "glen," and went down the path and a flight of steps, amid a flock of trilling goldfinches and past a row of lordly arbor-vitæ trees, to the brook, and up the bank of the brook to the famous bridge. Of this, considered by itself, I shall attempt no description. The material facts are, in the language of the guidebook, that it is "a huge monolithic arch, 215 feet high, 100 feet wide, and 90 feet in span, crossing the ravine of Cedar Brook." Magnificent as it is, there is, for me at least, not much to say concerning it, or concerning my sensations in the presence of it. Not that it disappointed me. On the contrary, it was from the first more imposing than I had expected to find it. I loved to look at it, from one side and from the other, from beneath and from above. I walked under it and over it (on the public highway, for it is a bridge not only in name, but in fact) many times, by sunlight and by moonlight, and should be glad to do the same many times more; but perhaps my taste is peculiar; at all events, such "wonders of nature" do not charm me or wear with me like a beautiful

landscape. It was so, I remember, at Ausable Chasm; interesting, grand, impressive, but a place in which I had no passion for staying, no sense of exquisite delight or solemnity. In Burlington, just across Lake Champlain, I could sit by the hour, even on the flat roof of the hotel, and gaze upon the blue water and the blue Adirondacks beyond, — the sight was a feast of beauty; but this cleft in the rocks, — well, I was glad to walk through it and to shoot the rapids; there was nothing to be said in disparagement of the place, but it put me under no spell. I fear it would be the same with those marvelous Colorado cañons and "gardens of the gods." A wooded mountain side, a green valley, running water, a lake with islands, best of all, perhaps (for me, that is, and taking the years together), a New England hill pasture, with boulders and red cedars, berry bushes and fern patches, the whole bounded by stone walls and bordered with gray birches and pitch pines, — for sights to live with, let me have these and things like them in preference to any of nature's more freakish work, which appeals rather to curiosity than to the imagination and the affections.

Having gone under the arch (and looked in vain for Washington's initials on the wall), the visitor to Natural Bridge finds himself following up the brook — a lively stream — between lofty precipitous cliffs, that turn to steep wooded slopes as he proceeds. If he is like me, he pursues the path to the end, stopping here and there, — at the saltpetre cave, at Hemlock Island, and at Lost River, if nowhere else, — till he comes to the end at the falls, a distance of a mile, more or less. That is my way always. I must go straight through the place once; then, the edge of my curiosity dulled, I am in a condition to see and enjoy.

The ravine is a botanist's paradise: that, I should say, must be the first thought of every appreciative tourist. The elevation (fifteen hundred feet), the latitude, and the limestone rocks work together to that end. In a stay of a week I could see, of course, but one set of flowers; and in my preoccupation I passed many herbs and shrubs, mostly out of bloom, the names of which I neither knew nor attempted to discover. One of the things that struck my admiration on the instant was the beauty of the

columbine as here displayed; a favorite with me always, for more reasons than one, but never beheld in all its loveliness till now. If the election could be held here, and on the 1st of May, there would be no great difficulty in securing a unanimous vote for *Aquilegia Canadensis* as the "national flower." It was in its glory at the time of my earlier visits, brightening the face of the cliffs, not in a mass, but in scattered sprays, as high as the eyesight could follow it; looking, even under the opera-glass, as if it grew out of the rock itself. With it were sedges, ferns, and much of a tufted white flower, which at first I made no question must be the common early saxifrage. When I came upon it within reach, however, I saw at once that it was a plant of quite another sort, some member of the troublesome mustard family, — *Draba ramosissima*, as afterward turned out. It was wonderful how closely it simulated the appearance of *Saxifraga Virginiensis*, though the illusion was helped, no doubt, by the habit I am in of seeing columbine and saxifrage together.

The ground in many places was almost a mat of violets, three kinds of which were in

special profusion: the tall, fragrant white *Canadensis*, the long-spurred *rostrata*, — of a very pale blue, with darker streaks and a darker centre (like our blue meadow violets in that respect), — and the common *palmata*. The long-spurred violet was new to me, and both for that reason and for itself peculiarly attractive. As I passed up the glen on the right of the brook beyond Hemlock Island, so called, carpeted with partridge-berry vines bearing a wondrous crop ("See the berries!" my notebook says), I began to find here and there the large trillium (*T. grandiflorum*), some of the blossoms clear white, others of a delicate rosy tint. The rosy ones had been open longer than the others, it appeared; for the flowers blush with age, — a very modest and graceful habit. Like the spurred violet, the trillium is a plant also of northern New England, but happily for my present enjoyment I had never seen it there. And the same is to be said of the large yellow bellwort, which was here the trillium's neighbor, and looked only a little less distinguished than the trillium itself.

If I were to name all the plants I saw, or

even all that attracted my particular notice, the non-botanical reader would quit me for a tiresome chronicler. Hepatica and bloodroot had dropped their last petals; but anemone and rue anemone were still in bloom, with cranesbill, spring beauty, ragwort, mitrewort, robin's plantain, Jack-in-the-pulpit, wild ginger (two thick handsome leaves hiding a dark-purplish three-horned urn of an occult and almost sinister aspect), two or more showy chickweeds, two kinds of white stone-crop (*Sedum ternatum* and *S. Nevii*, the latter a novelty), mandrake (sheltering its precious round bud under an umbrella, though to-day it neither rained nor shone), pepper-root, gill-over-the-ground (where did *it* come from, I wondered), Dutchman's breeches (the leaves only), *Orchis spectabilis* (which I did not know till after a few days it blossomed), and many more. A new shrub — almost a tree — was the bladder-nut, with drooping clusters of small whitish flowers, like bunches of currant blossoms in their manner of growth and general appearance; especially dear to humble-bees, which would not be done with a branch even while I carried it in my hand.

In one place, as I stooped to examine a boulder covered thickly with the tiny walking fern, of which the ravine contains a great abundance, — faded, ill conditioned, and homely, but curious, and, better still, a stranger, — I found the ground littered with bright yellowish magnolia petals; and if I looked into the sky for a passing bird, it was almost as likely as not that I should find myself looking through the branches of a soaring tulip-tree, — a piece of magnificence that is one of the most constant of my Alleghanian admirations. All the upper part of the glen is pervaded by a dull rumbling or moaning sound, — the voice of Lost River, out of which the tourist is supposed to have drunk at the only point where it shows itself (and there only to those who look for it), a quarter of a mile back. Another all-pervasive thing is the wholesome fragrance of arbor-vitæ. It is fitting, surely, that the tree of life should be growing in this floral paradise. There are few places, I imagine, where it flourishes better.

On my way back toward the bridge I discovered, as was to be expected, many things that had been overlooked on my way out;

and every successive visit was similarly rewarded. A pleasing sight at the bridge itself was the continual fluttering of butterflies — Turnus and his smaller and paler brother Ajax, especially — against the face of the cliffs, sipping from the deep honey-jars of the columbines. Here, too, I often stopped awhile to enjoy the doings of several pairs of rough-winged swallows that had their nests in a row of holes in the rock, between two of the strata. Most romantic homes they looked, under the overhanging ledge, — a narrow platform below, ferns and sedges nodding overhead, with tall arbor-vitæ trees a little higher on the cliff, and water dropping continually before the doors. One of the nests, I noticed, had directly in front of it a patch of low green moss, the neatest of door-mats. The holes were only a few feet above the level of the stream, but there was no approach to them without wading; for which reason, perhaps, the owners paid little attention to me, even when I got as near them as I could. In and out they went, quite at their ease, resting now and then upon a jutting shelf, or perching in the branches of some tree near

at hand. Once three of them sat side by side before one of the openings, which after all may have admitted to some sizable cavern wherein different pairs were living together. They are the least beautiful of swallows, but for this time, at all events, they had displayed a remarkably pretty taste in the choice of a nesting-site.

The birds of Cedar Creek, however, were not the rough-wings, but the Louisiana water thrushes. On my first jaunt through the ravine (May 1) I counted seven of them, here one and there another, the greater part in free song; and while I never found so many again at any one visit, I was never there without seeing and hearing at least two or three. It was exactly such a spot as the water thrush loves, — a quick stream, with boulders and abundant vegetation. The song, I am sorry to be obliged to confess, as I have confessed before, is not to me all that it appears to be to other listeners; probably not all that a longer acquaintance and a more intimate association would make it. It is loud and ringing, — for a warbler's song, I mean; in that respect well adapted to the bird's ordinary surroundings, being easily

heard above the noise of a pretty lively brook. It is heard the better, too, because of its remarkably disconnected, staccato character. Every note is by itself. Though the bird haunts the vicinity of running water, there is no trace of fluidity in its utterance. No bird-song could be less flowing. It neither gurgles nor runs smoothly, note merging into note. It would be too much to call it declamatory, perhaps, but it goes some way in that direction. At least we may call it emphatic. At different times I wrote it down in different words, none of which could be expected to do more than assist, first the writer's memory, and then the reader's imagination, to recall and divine the rhythm and general form of the melody. For that — I speak for myself — a verbal transcription, imperfect as it must be, in the nature of the case, is likely to prove more intelligible, and therefore more useful, than any attempt to reproduce the music itself by a resort to musical notation. As most frequently heard here, the song consisted of eight notes, like "Come — come — come — come, — you 're a beauty," delivered rather slowly. "Lazily" was the word I some-

times employed, but "slowly" is perhaps better, though it is true that the song is cool and, so to speak, very unpassionate. Dynamically I marked it , while the variations in pitch may be indicated roughly thus: - - - - - - - - -. Two of the lower notes, the fifth and sixth, were shorter than the others, — half as long, if my ear and memory are to be trusted. Sometimes a bird would break out into a bit of flourish at the end, but to my thinking such improvised cadenzas, as they had every appearance of being, only detracted from the simplicity of the strain without adding anything appreciable to its beauty or its effectiveness.

This song, which the reader will perhaps blame me for trying thus to analyze (I shall not blame *him*), very soon grew to be almost a part of the glen; so that I never recall the brook and the cliffs without seeming to hear it rising clear and sweet above the brawling of the current; and when I hear it, I can see the birds flitting up or down the creek, just in advance of me, with sharp *chips* of alarm or displeasure; now balancing uneasily on a boulder in mid-stream (a posterior bodily fluctuation, half graceful, half comical,

slanderously spoken of as teetering) and singing a measure or two, now taking to an overhanging branch, sometimes at a considerable height, for the same tuneful purpose. One acrobatic fellow, I remember, walked for some distance along the seemingly perpendicular face of the cliff, slipping now and then on the wet surface and having to "wing it" for a space, yet still pausing at short intervals to let out a song. In truth, the happy creatures were just then brimming over with music; and if I seem to praise their efforts but grudgingly, it is to be said, on the other hand, in justice to the song and to myself, that my appreciation of it grew as the days passed. Whatever else might be true of it, it was the voice of the place.

Of birds beside the rough-wings and the water thrushes there were surprisingly few in the glen, though, to be sure, there may well have been many more than I found trace of. The splashing of a mountain brook is very pleasing music, — more pleasing, in itself considered, than the great majority of bird-songs, perhaps, — but an ornithological hobbyist may easily have too much of it. I call to mind how increasingly vexatious, and

at last all but intolerable, a turbulent Vermont stream (a branch of Wait's River) became to me, some years ago, as it followed my road persistently mile after mile in the course of a May vacation. One gets on the track of the smaller birds through hearing their faint calls in the bushes and treetops; and how was I to catch such indispensable signals with this everlasting uproar in my ears? So it was here in Cedar Creek ravine; it would have to be a pretty loud voice to be heard above the din of the hurrying water. And the birds, on their side, had something of the same difficulty; or so I judged from the unconventional behavior of a blue yellow-backed warbler that flitted through the hanging branches of a tree within a few inches of my hat, having plainly no suspicion of a human being's proximity. The tufted titmouse could be heard, of course. He would make a first-rate auctioneer, it seemed to me, with his penetrating, indefatigable voice and his genius for repetition. Now and then, too, I caught the sharp, sermonizing tones of a red-eyed vireo. Once an ovenbird near me mounted a tree hastily, branch by branch, and threw himself from the top

for a burst of his afternoon medley; and at the bridge a phœbe sat calling. These, with a pair of cardinal grosbeaks, were all the birds I saw in the glen during my first day's visit.

In fact, I had the place pretty nearly to myself, not only on this first day, but for the entire week. Once in a great while a human visitor was encountered, but for the most part I went up and down the path with no disturbance to my meditations. Happily for me, the Bridge was now in its dull season. Many tourists had been here. The trunks of the older trees, the beeches especially, were scarred thickly with inglorious initials, some of them so far from the ground that the authors of them must have stood on one another's shoulders in their determination to get above the crowd. (In work of this kind an inch or two makes all the difference between renown and obscurity.) The fact was emblematic, I thought. So do men hoist and boost themselves into fame, not only in Cedar Creek ravine, but in the "great world," as we call it, outside. Who so lowly-minded as not to believe that he could make a name for himself if only he had a step-

ladder? At the arch, likewise, such autographers had been busy ever since Washington's day. I peeped into a crevice to obtain a closer view of a tiny fern, and there before me was a penciled name, invisible till I came thus near to it. One of the meek the writer must have been; a lead pencil, and so fine a hand! Dumphy of New Orleans. Why should I not second his modest bid for immortality? A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. By all means let Dumphy of New Orleans be remembered.

As for Washington's "G. W.," the letters are said to be still decipherable by those who know exactly where to look and exactly what to look for; but I can testify to nothing of myself. I was told where the initials were; one was much plainer than the other, my informant said, — which seemed to imply that one of them, at least, was more or less a matter of faith; he would go down with me some day and point them out; but the hour convenient to both of us never came, and so, although I almost always spent a minute or two in the search as I passed under the arch, I never detected them or

anything that I could even imagine to stand for them. I have had experience enough of such things, however, to be aware that my failure proves nothing as against the witness of other men's eyesight. Certainly I know of no ground for doubting that Washington cut his initials on the cliff; and if he did, it seems reasonable to believe that tradition would have preserved a knowledge of the place, and so have made it possible to find them now in all their inevitable indistinctness after so long an exposure to the wear of the elements. Neither do I esteem it anything but a natural and worthy curiosity for the visitor to wish to see them; and I may add my hope that all young men who are destined to achieve Washington's measure of distinction will cut their names large and deep in every such wall, for the benefit of future generations. As for the rest of us, if we must scratch our names in stone or carve them on the bark of trees, let us seek some sequestered nook, where the sight of our doings will neither be an offense to others nor make of ourselves a laughing-stock.

I have said that I discovered Dumphy of

New Orleans while leaning against the cliff to peer into a crevice in search of a diminutive fern. This fern was of much interest to me, being nothing less than the wall-rue spleenwort (*Asplenium Ruta-muraria*), for which I had looked without success in years past on the limestone cliffs of northern Vermont, at Willoughby and elsewhere. The fronds, stipe and all, last-year plants in full fruit, were less than three inches in length. Another fern, one size larger, but equally new and interesting, was the purple-stemmed cliff-brake (*Pellæa atropurpurea*), which also had eluded my search in its New England habitat. Both these rarities (plants which will grow only on limestone cannot easily be degraded into commonness) I could have gathered here in moderate numbers, but of course collecting is not permitted; in the nature of the case it cannot be, in a spot so frequented by curiosity-seekers. It was pleasure enough for me, at any rate, to see them.

Along the bottom of the ravine I had remarked a profusion of a strikingly beautiful larger fern (but still "smallish," as my pencil says), with showy red stems and a

most graceful curving or drooping habit. This I could not make out for a time; but it proved to be, as I soon began to suspect, *Cystopteris bulbifera*, to my thinking one of the loveliest of all things that grow. I had seen it abundant at Willoughby, Vermont, and at Owl's Head, Canada, ten years before; but either my memory was playing me a trick, or there was here a very considerable diminution in the length of the fronds, accompanied by a decided heightening in the color of the stalk and rhachis. Before long, however, I found a specimen already beginning to show its bulblets, and these, with a study of Dr. Eaton's description, left me in no doubt as to the plant's identity.

What other ferns may have been growing in the ravine I cannot now pretend to say. I remember the Christmas fern, a goodly supply of the dainty little *Asplenium trichomanes*, and tufts of what I took with reasonable certainty for *Cystopteris fragilis* in its early spring stage, than which few things can be more graceful. On the upper edge of the ravine, when I left the place one day by following a maze of zigzag cattle-paths up the steep slope, and found myself,

to my surprise, directly in the rear of the hotel, I came upon a dense patch of a smallish, very narrow, dark-stemmed fern, new to my eyes, — the hairy lip-fern, so called (*Cheilanthes vestita*). These fronds, too, like those of the cliff-brake and the wall-rue spleenwort, were of last year's growth, thickly covered on the back with brown "fruit-dots," and altogether having much the appearance of dry herbarium specimens; but they were good to look at, nevertheless. Here, as in the case of *Pellæa atropurpurea*, it was a question not only of a new species, but of a new genus.

From my account of the scarcity of birds in Cedar Creek ravine the reader will have already inferred, perhaps, that I did not spend my days there, great as were its botanical attractions. My last morning's experience at Pulaski, the evidence there seen that the vernal migration was at full tide, or near it, had brought on a pretty acute attack of ornithological fever, — a spring disease which I am happy to believe has become almost an epidemic in some parts of the United States within recent years, — and not even the sight of new ferns

and new flowers could allay its symptoms. I had counted upon finding a similar state of things here, — all the woods astir with wings. Instead of that, I found the fields alive with chipping sparrows, the air full of chimney swifts, the shade trees in front of the hotel vocal with goldfinch notes, and, comparatively speaking, nothing else. By the end of the second day I was fast becoming disconsolate. "No birds here," I wrote in my journal. "I have tried woods of all sorts. A very few parula warblers, two or three red-eyed vireos, one yellow-throated vireo, seven Louisiana water thrushes in the glen, one prairie warbler, and a few oven-birds! No Bewick wrens. Two purple finches and one or two phœbes have been the only additions to my Virginia list." A pitiful tale. Vacations are short and precious, and it goes hard with us to see them running to waste.

The next evening (May 3) it was the same story continued. "It is marvelous, the difference between this beautiful place, diversified with fields and woods, — hard wood, cedar, pine, — it is marvelous, the difference between this heavenly spot and Pulaski in

the matter of birds. There I registered six new arrivals in half an hour Wednesday morning; here I have made but six additions to my list in two full days. There is scarcely a sign of warbler migration. Was it that in Pulaski the woods were comparatively small, and the birds had to congregate in them? Or does Pulaski lie in a route of migration?" Wild surmises, both of them; but wisdom is not to be looked for in a fever patient.

"Six additions in two full days," I wrote; but the second day was not yet full. As evening came on I went out to stand awhile upon the bridge; and while I listened to the brawling of the creek and admired the beautiful scene below me, the moon shining straight down upon it, a nighthawk called from the sky, and afterward — not from the sky — a whippoorwill. Here, then, were two more names for my catalogue; but even so, — six or eight, — it was a beggarly rate of increase in such a favored spot and in the very nick of the season. The "six additions," it may ease the reader's curiosity to know, were the Carolina wren, the summer tanager, the purple finch, the indigo bunting, the blue-gray gnatcatcher, and the phœbe.

One compensation there was for the ornithological barrenness of these first few days: I had the more leisure for botany. And the hours were not thrown away, although at the time I was almost ready to think they were, with so many of them devoted to ransacking the Manual; for a man who does not collect specimens to carry home with him must, as it were, drive his field work and his closet work abreast; he must study out his findings as he goes along. On the evening of the second day, for example, I wrote in my journal thus, — the final entry under that date, as the reader may guess: "In bed. Strange how we flatter ourselves with a knowledge of names. I have spent much time to-day looking up the names of flowers and ferns, and somehow feel as if I had learned something in so doing. Really, however, I have learned only that some one else has seen the things before me, and called them so and so. At best that is *nearly* all I have learned." But after setting down the results of my investigations, especially of those having to do with the pretty draba and the bulbiferous fern, I concluded in a less positive strain: "Well,

the hunt for names does quicken observation and help to relate and classify things." That was a qualification well put in. The whole truth was never written on one side of the leaf. If *all* our botany were Latin names, as Emerson says, we should have little to boast of; yet even that would be one degree better than nothing, as Emerson himself felt when he visited a museum and saw the cases of shells. "I was hungry for names," he remarks; and so have all men of intelligence been since the day of the first systematic, name-conferring naturalist, the man who dwelt in Eden. Let us be thankful for manuals, I say, that offer on easy terms a speaking acquaintance, if nothing more, with the world of beauty about us. Things take their value from comparison, and my own ignorance was but a little while ago so absolute that now I am proud to know so much as a name.

Meanwhile, to come back to Natural Bridge, I had found the country of a most engaging sort. In truth, while the bridge itself is the "feature" of the place, as we speak in these days, it is by no means its only, or, as I should say, its principal attrac-

tion, so far, at least, as a leisurely visit is concerned. A man may see it and go, — as most tourists do; but if he stays, he will find that the region round about not only has charms of its own, but is one of the prettiest he has ever set eyes on; and that, I should think, though he be neither a botanist, nor an ornithologist, nor any other kind of natural historian. For myself, at all events, I had already come to that conclusion, notwithstanding I had yet to see some of the most beautiful parts of the country, and was, besides, far too much concerned about the birds (the absentees in particular) and the flowers to have quieted down to any adequate appreciation of the general landscape. I have never yet learned to see a prospect on the first day, or while in the eager expectation of new things, although, like every one else, I can exclaim with a measure of shallow sincerity, "Beautiful! beautiful!" even at the first moment.

As my mood now was, at any rate, fine scenery did not satisfy me; and on the morning of May 4, after two days and a half of botanical surfeit and ornithological starvation, I packed my trunk preparatory

to going elsewhere. First, however, I would try the woods once more, if perchance something might have happened overnight. Otherwise, so I informed the landlord, I would return in season for an early luncheon, and should expect to be driven to the station for the noon train northward.

I went to a promising-looking hill covered with hard-wood forest, a spot already visited more than once, — Buck Hill I heard it called afterward, — and was no sooner well in the woods than it became evident that something *had* happened. The treetops were swarming with birds, and I had my hands full with trying to see and name them. Old trees are grand creations, — among the noblest works of God, I often think; but for a bird-gazer they have one disheartening drawback, especially when, as now, the birds not only take to the topmost boughs (even the hummer and the magnolia warbler, so my notes say, went with the multitude to do evil), but, to make matters worse, are on the move northward or southward, or flitting in simple restlessness from hill to hill. However, I did my best with them while the fun lasted. Then all in a mo-

ment they were gone, though I did not see them go; and nothing was left but the wearisome iterations of oven-birds and red-eyes where just now were so many singers and talkers, among which, for aught I could tell, there might have been some that it would have been worth the price of a long vacation to scrape even a treetop acquaintance with.

Indeed, it was certain that one member of the flock was a rarity, if not an absolute novelty. That was the most exciting and by all odds the most deplorable incident of the whole affair. I had obtained several glimpses of him, but had been unable to determine his identity; a warbler, past all reasonable doubt, with pure white under parts (the upper parts quite invisible) except for a black or blackish line, barely made out, across the lower throat or the upper breast. He, of course, had vanished with the rest, the more was the pity. I had made a guess at him, to be sure; it is a poor naturalist who cannot do as much as that (but a really good naturalist would "form a hypothesis," I suppose) under almost any circumstances. I had called him

a cerulean warbler. Once in my life I had seen a bird of that species, but only for a minute. If he wore a black breast-band, I did not see it, or else had forgotten it. If I could only have had a look at this fellow's back and wings! As it was, I was not likely ever to *know* him, though the printed description would either demolish or add a degree of plausibility to my offhand conjecture.

The better course, after losing a bevy of wanderers in this way, is perhaps to remain where one is and await the arrival of another detachment of the migratory host. This advice, or something like it, I seem to remember having read, at all events; but I have never schooled myself to such a pitch of quietism. For a time, indeed, I could not believe that the birds *were* lost, and must hunt the hilltop over in the hope of another chance at them. An empty hope. So I did what I always do: the game having flown, I took my own departure also. I should not find the same flock again, but with good luck — which now it was easy to expect — I might find another; and except for the single mysterious stranger, that

would be better still. One thing I was sure of, — Natural Bridge was not to be left out of the warbler migration; and one thing I forgot entirely, — that I had planned to leave it by the noonday train.

My useless chase over the broad hilltop had brought me to the side opposite the one by which I had ascended, and to save time, as I persuaded myself, I plunged down, as best I could, without a trail, — a piece of expensive economy, almost of course. In the first place, this haphazardous descent took me longer than it would have done to retrace my steps; and in the second place, I was compelled for much of the distance to force my way through troublesome underbrush, in doing which I made of necessity — being a white man — no little noise, and so was the less likely to hear the note of any small bird, or to come close upon him without putting him to flight. In general, let the bird-gazer keep to the path, except in open woods, or as some specific errand may lead him away from it. In one way and another, nevertheless, I got down at last, and after beating over a piece of pine wood, with little or no result, I crossed a field and

a road, and entered a second tract of hardwood forest.

The trees were comfortably low, with much convenient shrubbery, and after a little, seeing myself at the centre of things, as it were, I dropped into a seat and allowed the birds to gather about me. At my back was a bunch of white-throated sparrows. From the same quarter a chat whistled now and then, and white-breasted nuthatches and a Carolina chickadee did likewise, the last with a noticeable variation in his tune, which had dwindled to three notes. Here, as on the hill I had just left, wood pewees and Acadian flycatchers announced themselves, in tones so dissimilar as to suggest no hint of blood relationship. The wood pewee is surely the gentleman of the family, so far as the voice may serve as an indication of character. In dress and personal appearance he is a flycatcher of the flycatchers; but what a contrast between his soft, plaintive, exquisitely modulated whistle, the very expression of refinement, and the wild, rasping, over-emphatic vociferations that characterize the family in general! The more praise to him. The Acadians seemed

to have come northward in a body. Nothing had been seen or heard of them before, but from this morning they abounded in all directions. In a single night they had taken possession of the woods. Here was the first Canadian warbler of the season, singing from a perch so uncommonly elevated (he is a lover of bushy thickets rather than of trees) that for a time it did not come to me who he was, — so exceedingly earnest and voluble. A black-throated blue warbler almost brushed my elbow. Redstarts were never so splendid, I thought, the white of the dogwood blossoms, now in their prime, setting off the black and orange of the birds in a most brilliant manner, as was true also of the deep vermilion of the summer tanager. A Blackburnian warbler, whose flame-colored throat needs no setting but its own, had fallen into a lyrical mood very unusual for him, and sang almost continuously for at least half an hour, — a poor little song in a thin little voice, but full of pleasant suggestions in every note. The first Swainson thrush was present, with no companion of his own kind, so far as appeared. I prolonged my stay on purpose to hear him sing,

but was obliged to content myself with the sight of him and the sound of his sweet, quick whistle.

All the while, as I watched one favorite another would come between us. Once it was a humming-bird, a bit of animate beauty that must always be attended to; and once, when the place had of a sudden fallen silent, and I had taken out a book, I was startled by a flash of white among the branches, — a red-headed woodpecker, in superb color, new for the year, and on all accounts welcome. He remained for a time in silence, and then in silence departed (he had been almost too near me before he knew it); but having gone, he began a little way off to play the tree-frog for my amusement. After him a hairy woodpecker made his appearance, with sharp, peremptory signals, highly characteristic; and then, from some point near by, a rose-breasted grosbeak's *hic* was heard.

It was high noon before I was done with "receiving" (one of the prettiest "functions" of the year, though none of the newspapers got wind of it), and returned to the hotel, where the landlord smiled when I told

him that some friends of mine had arrived, and I should stay a few days longer.

II

My enjoyment of the country about the Bridge may be said to have begun with my settling down for a more leisurely stay. Hurry and discontent are poor helps to appreciation. That afternoon, the morning having been devoted to ornithological excitements, I strolled over to Mount Jefferson, and spent an hour in the observatory, where a delicious breeze was blowing. The "mountain" proved to be nothing more than a round grassy hilltop, — the highest point in a sheep-pasture, — but it offered, nevertheless, a wide and charming prospect: mountains near and far, a world of green hills, with here and there a level stretch, most restful to the eye, of the James River valley, in the great Valley of Virginia. Up from the surrounding field came the tinkle of sheep-bells, and down in one corner of it young men were slowly gathering, some in wagons, some on horseback, for a game of ball. There was to be a "match" that

"evening," I had been told, between the Bridge nine (I am sorry not to remember its name) and the Buena Vistas. It turned out, however, so I learned the next day, that a supposed case of smallpox at Buena Vista had made such an interchange of athletic courtesies inexpedient for the time being, and the Bridge men were obliged to be content with a trial of skill among themselves, for which they chose up ("picked off") after the usual fashion, the two leaders deciding which should have the first choice by the old Yankee test of grasping a bat alternately hand over hand, till one of them should be able to cover the end of it with his thumb. Such things were pleasant to hear of. I accepted them as of patriotic significance, tokens of national unity. My informant, by the way, was the same man, a young West Virginian, who had told me where to look for Washington's initials on the wall of the bridge. My specialties appealed to him in a measure, and he confessed that he wished he were a botanist. He was always very fond of flowers. His side had been victorious in the ball game, he said, in answer to my inquiry. Some of

the players must have come from a considerable distance, it seemed, as there was no sign of a village or even of a hamlet, so far as I had discovered, anywhere in the neighborhood. The Bridge is not in any township, but simply in Rockbridge County, after a Virginia custom quite foreign to a New Englander's notions of geographical propriety.

The prospect from Mount Jefferson was beautiful, as I have said, but on my return I happened upon one that pleased me better. I had been down through Cedar Creek ravine, and had taken my own way out, up the right-hand slope through the woods, noting the flowers as I walked, especially the blue-eyed grass and the scarlet catchfly (battlefield pink), a marvelous bit of color, and was following the edge of the cliff toward the hotel, when, finding myself still with time to spare, I sat down to rest and be quiet. By accident I chose a spot where between ragged, homely cedars I looked straight down the glen — over a stretch of the brook far below — to the bridge, through which could be seen wooded hills backed by Thunder Mountain, long and massive, just now mostly in shadow, like the rest of the

world, but having its lower slopes touched with an exquisite half-light, which produced a kind of prismatic effect upon the freshly green foliage. It was an enchanting spectacle and a delightful hour. Now my eye settled upon the ravine and the brook, now upon the arch of the bridge, now upon the hills beyond. And now, as I continued to look, the particulars fell into place, — dropping in a sense out of sight, — and the scene became one. By and by the light increased upon the broad precipitous face of the mountain, softness and beauty inexpressible, while the remainder of the landscape lay in deep shadow.

I fell to wondering, at last, what it is that constitutes the peculiar attractiveness of a limited view — limited in breadth, not in depth — as compared with a panorama of half the horizon. The only answer I gave myself was that, for the supreme enjoyment of beauty, the eye must be at rest, satisfied, with no temptation to wander. We are finite creatures with infinite desires. The sight must go far, — to the rim of the world, or to some grand interposing object so remote as to be of itself a natural and satisfy-

ing limit of vision; and the eye must be held to that point, not by a distracting exercise of the will, but by the quieting constraint of circumstances.

Let my theorizing be true or false, I greatly enjoyed the picture; the deep, dark, wooded ravine, with the line of water running through it lengthwise, the magnificent stone arch, the low hills in the middle distance, and Thunder Mountain a background for the whole. The mountain, as has been said, was a long ridge, not a peak; and sharp as it looked from this point of view, it was very likely flat at the top. Like Lookout Mountain and Walden's Ridge, it might, for anything I knew, be roomy enough to hold one or two Massachusetts counties upon its summit. While I sat gazing at it the sun went down and left it of a deep sombre blue. Then, of a sudden, a small heron flew past, and a pileated woodpecker somewhere behind me set up a prolonged and lusty shout; and a few minutes later I was startled to see between me and the sunset sky a flock of six big herons flying slowly in single file, like so many pelicans. From their size they should have been *Ardea hero-*

dias, but in that light there was no telling of colors. It was a ghostly procession, so silent and unexpected, worthy of the place and of the hour. I was beginning to feel at home. A wood thrush sang for me as I continued my course to the hotel, and my spirit sang with him. "I 'm glad I am alive," my pencil wrote of its own accord at the end of the day's jottings.

I woke the next morning to the lively music of a whippoorwill, — the same, I suppose, that had sung me to sleep the evening before. He performed that service faithfully as long as I remained at the Bridge, and always to my unmixed satisfaction. Whippoorwills are among my best birds, and of recent years I have had too little of them. Immediately after breakfast I must go again to the roadside wood, and then to Buck Hill, as a dog must go again to bark under a tree up which he has once driven a cat or a squirrel. But there is no duplicating of experiences. The birds — the flocks of travelers — were not there. Chats were calling *ceow*, *ceow*, with the true countryman's twang; and what was much better, a Swainson thrush was singing. Better still,

a pair of blue yellow-backed warblers (the most abundant representatives of the family thus far) had begun the construction of a nest in a black-walnut-tree, suspending it from a rather large branch ("as big as my thumb") at a height of perhaps twenty feet. It was little more than a frame as yet, the light shining through it everywhere; and the bird, perhaps because of my presence, seemed in no haste about its completion. I saw her bring what looked like a piece of lichen and adjust it into place (though she carried it elsewhere first — with wonderful slyness!), but my patience gave out before she came back with a second one.

On Buck Hill, in the comparative absence of birds, I amused myself with a "dry land tarrapin," as my West Virginia acquaintance had called it (otherwise known as a box turtle), a creature which I had seen several times in my wanderings, and had asked him about; a new species to me, of a peculiarly humpbacked appearance, and curious for its habit of shutting itself up in its case when disturbed, the anterior third of the lower shell being jointed for that purpose. A phlegmatic customer, it seemed

to be; looking at me with dull, unspeculative eyes, and sometimes responding to a pretty violent nudge with only a partial closing of its lid. It is very fond of may apples (mandrake), I was told, and is really one of the "features" of the dry hill woods. I ran upon it continually.

A lazy afternoon jaunt over a lonely wood road, untried before, yielded little of mentionable interest except the sight of a blue grosbeak budding the upper branches of a tree in the manner of a purple finch or a rose-breast. I call him a blue grosbeak, as I called him at the time; but he went into my book that evening with a damnatory question mark attached to his name. He had been rather far away and pretty high; and the possibilities of error magnified themselves on second thought, till I said to myself, "Well, he may have been an indigo-bird, after all." Second thought is the mother of uncertainty; and uncertainties are poor things for a man's comfort. The seasons were met here; for even while I busied myself with the blue grosbeak (as he pretty surely was, for all my want of assurance) a crossbill flew over with loud calls.

In the same place I heard a tremendous hammering a little on one side of me, so vigorous a piece of work that I was persuaded the workman could be nobody but a pileated woodpecker. A long time I stood with my gaze fastened upon the tree from which the noise seemed to come. Would the fellow never show himself? Yes, he put his head out from behind a limb at last (what a fiery crest!), saw me on the instant, and was gone like a flash. Then from a little distance he set up a resounding halloo. This was only the second time that birds of his kind had been seen hereabout, but the voice had been heard daily, and more than once I had noticed what I could have no doubt were nest-holes of their making. One of these, on Buck Hill, — freshly cut, if appearances went for anything, — I undertook to play the spy upon; but if the nest was indeed in use the birds were too wary for me, or I was very unfortunate in my choice of hours. Time was precious, and the secret seemed likely to cost more than it would bring, with so many other matters inviting my attention. Nest or no nest, I was glad to be within the frequent sound of that

wild, ringing, long-drawn shout, a true voice of the wilderness; as if the Hebrew prophecy were fulfilled, and the mountains and the hills had found a tongue.

It was not until the sixth day that I went to Lincoln Heights, a place worth all the rest of the countryside, I soon came to think, with the single exception of Cedar Creek ravine. A winding wood road carried me thither (the distance may be two miles; but I have little idea what it is, though I covered it once or twice a day for the next four days), and might have been made — half made, just to my liking — for my private convenience. I believe I never met any one upon it, going or coming.

The glory of the spot is its trees; but with me, as things fell out, these took in the order of time a second place. My first admiration was not for them, admirable as they were, but for a few birds in the tops of them. In short, at my first approach to the Heights (there is no thought of climbing, but only the most gradual of ascents) I began to hear from the branches overhead, now here, now there, an occasional weak warbler's song that set my curiosity on edge. It was not

the parula's (blue yellow-back's), but like it. What should it be, then, except the cerulean's? By and by I caught a glimpse of a bird, clear white below, with a dark line across the breast; and yes, I saw what I was looking for, — though the bird flew to another branch the next moment, — black streaks along the sides of the body. There were at least eight or ten others like him in the treetops; and it was a neck-breaking half-hour that I passed in watching them, determined as I was to gain a view not only of the under parts, but of the back and wings. The labor and difficulty of the search were increased indefinitely by the confusing presence of numerous other warblers of various kinds in the same lofty branches, making it inevitable that many opera-glass shots should be wasted. It is no help to a man's equanimity at such a time to spend a priceless three minutes — any one of which may be the last — in getting the glass upon a tiny thing that flits incessantly from one leafy twig to another, only to find in the end that it is nothing but a myrtle warbler; a pretty creature, no doubt, but of no more consequence just now than an English spar-

row. To-day, however, the birds favored me; no untimely whim hurried them away to another wood, and patience had its reward. Little by little my purpose was accomplished and my mind cleared of all uncertainty. Then I took out my pencil to characterize the song while it was still in my ears, and still new. "Greatly like one of the more broken forms of the parula's," I wrote, a bird repeating it at that very instant by way of confirmation. "I can imagine a fairly sharp ear being deceived by it, especially in a place like this, where parulas have been singing from morning till night, until the listener has tired of them and become listless." This sentence the reader may keep in mind, if he will, to glance back upon for his amusement in the light of a subsequent experience which it will be my duty to relate before I have done with my story.

Between the migratory "transients" and the birds already at home, the place was pretty full of wings. A Swainson thrush sang, and from a bushy slope came a nasal thrush voice that should have been a veery's. I took chase at once, and caught a glimpse

of a reddish-brown bird darting out of sight before me. Do my best, I could find nothing more of it. If it was a veery, as I suppose, it was the only one I saw in Virginia, where the species, from Dr. Rives's account of the matter, seems to be a rather uncommon migrant. Unhappily, I could not bring my scientific conscience to list it on so hurried a sight, even with the note as corroborative testimony. That, for aught I could positively assert, might have been a gray-cheek's, while the reddish color might with equal possibility have belonged to a wood thrush, clear as it had seemed at the moment that what I was looking at was the back of the bird itself, and not the back of its head. Doubt is credulous. All kinds of negatives are plausible to it, and once it has adopted one it will maintain it in the face of the five senses.

On the opposite side of the path, in the bushy angles of a Virginia fence, a hooded warbler showed himself, furtive and silent, — my only Bridge specimen, to my great surprise ; and near him was a female black-throated blue, a queer-looking body, like nothing in particular, yet labeled past mis-

take, which I can never see without a kind of wonder. Among the treetop birds were Blackburnian warblers, black-throated greens and blues, chestnut-sides, redstarts, myrtle-birds, red-eyed and yellow-throated vireos, and indigo-birds. Many white-throated sparrows still lingered; singing flat, as usual, — the only birds I know of that find it impossible to hold the pitch. The defect has its favorable side; it makes their concerts amusing. I remember seeing a quiet gentleman thrown into fits of uncontrollable laughter by the rehearsal of a spring flock, bird after bird starting the tune, and not one in ten of them keeping its whistle true to the conclusion of the measure. All these things, — though they may seem not many, — with the long rests and numerous side excursions that went with them, consumed the morning hours before I knew it, so that I was hardly at the end of the way before it was time to return for dinner.

For the afternoon nothing was to be thought of but another visit to the same place, — "the finest place I have seen yet, and the finest walk." So I had put down the morning's discovery. The cerulean war-

bler I found spoken of by Dr. Rives as "accidental or very rare;" in the light of which entry the dozen or so of specimens seen and heard during the forenoon acquired a fresh interest.

The second jaunt, because it *was* a second one, could be taken more at leisure; and as the birds gave me less employment, my eyes were more upon the trees. These, as I had felt before, were a wonder and a comfort; it was a benediction to walk under them, as if one were within the precincts of a holy place: oaks for the most part (of several kinds), with black walnut, shagbark, tulip, chestnut, and other species, set irregularly, or rather left standing irregularly, two or three deep, beside the road on either hand; a royal uphill avenue, which near the top became an open grove. Except in Florida, I had never seen a more magnificent growth. Some of the trees had grapevines and Virginia creeper clinging about them. Up one huge oak, with strange flaky bark, like a shagbark-tree's (a white oak, nevertheless, to judge from its half-grown leaves), a grapevine had mounted for a height of forty feet, as I estimated the distance, not making use

of the bole, but of the limbs, seeming to leap from one to another, even when they were ten feet apart. It must have been of the tree's age, I suppose, and had grown with its growth. In the shadow of these giants, yet not overshadowed by them, were flowering dogwoods and redbuds. It is a pretty habit these two have of growing side by side, as if they knew the value of contrasted colors.

At a point on the edge of the grove I turned to enjoy the prospect southward: mountains everywhere, with the more pointed of the twin Peaks of Otter showing between two oaks that barely gave it room; all the mountains radiantly beautiful, with cloud shadows flecking their wooded slopes. Not a house was in sight; but in one place beyond the middle-distance hills a thin blue smoke was rising. There, doubtless, lay the valley of the James. Just before me, on the left of the open field, stood a peculiarly graceful dogwood, all in a glory of white, one fan-shaped branch above another, — a miracle of loveliness. The eye that saw it was satisfied with seeing. Beyond it a chat played the clown (knowing no better, even

to-day), and a rose-breast began warbling. It seemed a tender story, — sweetness beyond words, and happiness without a shadow. From a second point, a little farther on, the entire southern horizon came into view, with both the Peaks of Otter visible; a truly enchanting picture, the sky full of sunlight and floating white clouds.

In a treetop behind me a cerulean warbler had been singing, but flew away as I turned about. My only sight of him was on the wing, a mere speck in the air. Afterward a parula gave out his tune, running the notes straight upward and snapping them off at the end in whiplash fashion, as much as to say, "Now see if you can tell the difference." And then, just as I was ready to leave the grove, stepping along a footpath through a bramble patch, I descried almost at my feet a warbler, — a female by her look and demeanor, and a stranger; blue and white, with dark streakings along the sides. I lost her soon; but she had seemed to be looking for nest materials, and of course I waited for her to return. This she presently did, and now I saw her strip bits of bark from plant stems till she had her bill full of short pieces.

Carrying these, she disappeared in a bramble and grapevine thicket. I waited, but she did not come back. Then I stole into the place after her, and in a moment there she was before me; but without complaint or any symptom of perturbation she passed quietly along, and again I lost her. I kept my position till I was tired, and then went back to the wood and sat down; and in a few minutes — how it happened I could not tell — there she stood once more, wearing the same innocent, preoccupied air. This time I saw her fly down the slope and disappear in a clump of undergrowth. I followed, took a seat, waited, and continued to wait. All was in vain. That was the last of her. She had played her cards well, or perhaps I had played mine poorly; and finally I turned my steps homeward, where a comparison of my notes with Dr. Coues's description proved the bird to be, as I had believed, a female cerulean warbler. Her nest would probably be the first one of its kind ever found in Virginia.

On the way a male sang and showed himself. Now, too, I discovered for the first time that there were tupelo-trees among the

large oaks and walnuts; much smaller than they, and for that reason, it is to be supposed, not noticed in my three previous passages along the avenue. They are particular favorites of mine, and I made them sincere apologies. In another place was a patch of what I knew must be the fragrant sumach, something I had wished to see for many years: low, upright shrubs, yet resembling poison ivy so closely that for a minute I shrank from gathering a specimen, although I was certain beyond a peradventure that the plant was not poison ivy and could not be noxious to the touch; just as people in general, through force of early instruction and example (miscalled instinct), shiver at the thought of handling a snake, though it be of some kind which they know to be as harmless as a kitten. While in chase of the cerulean, also, I had stumbled on several bunches of cancer-root (*Conopholis*), rising out of the dead leaves, a dozen or more of stems in each close bunch; queer, unwholesome-looking, yellowish things, reminding me of ears of rice-corn, so called. I had never seen the plant till the day before.

The next morning my course was beyond

discussion or argument. I must go again to Lincoln Heights. The thought of the female cerulean warbler and her nest would not suffer me to do anything else. But for that matter, I should probably have taken the same path had I never seen her. The trees, the prospects, and the general birdiness of the place were of themselves an irresistible attraction. On the way I skirted a grove of small pines, standing between the road and the edge of Cedar Creek ravine: dull, scrubby trees, like pitch-pines, but less bright in color; of the same kind as those amid which, on Cameron Hill and Lookout Mountain, in Tennessee, there had been so notable a gathering of warblers the year before. *Pinus pungens*, Table Mountain pine, I suppose they were, though it must be acknowledged that I was never at the pains to settle the point. Here at Natural Bridge I had found all such woods deserted day after day, till I had ceased to think them worth looking into. Now, however, as I idled past, I caught the faint sibilant notes of a bird-song, and stopped to listen. Not a blackpoll's, I said to myself, but wonderfully near it. And then it flashed into my mind what a friend

had told me a few years before. "When you hear a song that is like the blackpoll's, but different," he had said, "look the bird up. It will most likely be a Cape May." He was one of the lucky men (almost the only one of my acquaintance) who had heard that rare warbler's voice. I turned aside, of course, and made a cautious entry among the pines. The bird continued its singing. Yes, it was like the blackpoll's, but with a *zip* rather than a *zee*. Nearer and nearer I crept, inch by inch. If the fellow *were* a Cape May, it would be carelessness inexcusable not to make sure of the fact. And soon I had my glass upon him, — in high plumage, red cheeks and all. He had not been disturbed in the least, and kept up his music till I had had my fill and could stay no longer, — all the while in low branches and in clear view. Few songs could be less interesting in themselves, but few could have been more welcome, — for the better part of twenty years I had been listening for it: about five notes, a little louder and more emphatic than the blackpoll's, it seemed to me, but still faint and, as I expressed it to myself, "next to nothing." The handsome

creature — olive and bright yellow, boldly marked with black and white — remained the whole time in one tree, traveling over the limbs in a rather listless fashion, and singing almost incessantly. He was my hundredth Virginia bird, — as my list then stood, question marks included, — and the second one whose song I had heard for the first time on this vacation trip. The day had begun prosperously.

After such a stirring up, a man's ears are apt to be abnormally sensitive, not to say imaginative; then, if ever, he will hear wonders: for which reason, it may be, I had turned but a corner or two before I was stopped by another set of notes, a strain that I knew, or felt that I ought to know, but could not place a name upon at the moment. This bird, too, was run down without difficulty, and proved to be a magnolia warbler, — another yellow-rump, like the Cape May and the myrtle-bird. The song, unlike its owner, is but slightly marked, and to make matters worse, is heard by me only in the season of the bird's spring passage; but I laughed at myself for not recognizing it. I was still in a mood for discoveries,

however, and within half an hour was again in eager chase, this time over a crazy zigzag fence into a dense thicket, all for a black-and-white creeper (my fiftieth specimen, perhaps, in the last fortnight), whose notes, as they came to me from a distance, sounded like a creeper's, to be sure, but with such a measure of difference as kept me on nettles till the author of them was in sight. I felt like a fool, as the common expression is, but was having "a good time," notwithstanding.

Here were the first trailing blackberry blossoms. The season was making haste. "Come, children, it is the 7th of May," I seemed to hear the "bud-crowned spring" saying. The woods had burst into almost full leaf within a week. This morning, also, I found the first flowers of the *Dodecatheon;* three plants, each with only one bloom as yet; white, odd-looking, pointed, — like a stylographic pen, my profane clerical fancy suggested. American cowslip and shooting star the flower is called in the Manual. American cyclamen would hit it pretty well, I thought, its most striking peculiarity being the reflexed, cyclamenic carriage of the petals. I had been wondering

what those broad root-leaves were, as I passed them here and there in the woods. The present was only my second sight of the blossom in a wild state, the first one having been on the battlefield of Chickamauga. It is matter for thankfulness, an enrichment of the memory, when a pretty flower is thus associated with a famous place.

Among the old trees on the Heights a cerulean warbler and a blue yellow-back were singing nearly in the same breath. If I did not become lastingly familiar with the distinction between the two songs, it was not to be the birds' fault. A second cerulean (or possibly the same one; it was impossible to be certain on that point, nor did it matter) was near the grapevine tangle, and at the moment of my approach was holding a controversy with a creeper. He had reserved the spot, as it appeared, and was insisting upon his claim. My spirits rose. It was this clump of shrubbery that I had come to sit beside, on the chance of seeing again, and tracking to her nest, the female whose behavior had so excited my hopes the afternoon before. "Nest small and neat,

in fork of a bough 20–50 feet from the ground:" so I had read in the Key, and henceforth knew what I was to look for. For a full hour I remained on guard. Twice the male cerulean chased some other bird about in a manner extremely suspicious; but he kept her (or him) so constantly on the move that I had no fair sight of her plumage. Beyond that my vigil went for nothing. I must try again. If a man cannot waste an hour once in a while, he had better not undertake the finding of birds' nests.

For the walk homeward I took a course of my own down the open face of the hill, climbing a fence or two (I could tell far in advance the safest places at which to get over — the soundest spots — by seeing the lumps of dry red clay left on the rails by the boots of previous travelers across lots), past prairie warblers and my first Natural Bridge bluebird, to the bottom of the valley. Then, finding myself ahead of time, I turned aside to see what might be in the woods of Buck Hill. There was little to mention: a blossom of the exquisite vernal fleur-de-lis, not before noticed here, and at the top two

cerulean warblers in full song. I had begun by this time to believe that this rare Virginia species would turn out to be pretty common hereabout in appropriate places.

Partly to test the truth of this opinion I planned an afternoon trip to a more distant eminence, which, like Buck Hill and Lincoln Heights, was covered with a deciduous forest. In the valley woods a grouse was drumming — a pretty frequent sound here — and Swainson thrushes were singing. These "New Hampshire thrushes," by the bye, are singers of the most generous sort, not only at home, but on their travels, all statements to the contrary notwithstanding. From May 5 to May 12 — including the latter half of my stay at Natural Bridge, two days at Afton, and one day in the cemetery woods at Arlington — I have them marked as singing daily, and one day at the Bridge they were heard in four widely separate places.

The hill for which I had set out lay on the left of the road, and between me and it stood a row of negro cabins. As I came opposite them I suddenly caught from the hillsides the notes of a Nashville warbler,

— or so I believed. This was a bird not yet included in my Virginia list. I had puzzled over its absence — the country seeming in all respects adapted to it — till I consulted Dr. Rives, by whom it is set down as "rare." Even then, emboldened by more than one happy experience, I told myself that I ought to find it. It is common enough in New England; why should it skip Virginia? And here it was; only I must go through the formality of a visual inspection, especially as just now the song came from rather far away. I entered one of the house-yards, — nobody objecting except a dog, — climbed the rear fence, and posted up the steep, rocky hill, past a humming-bird sipping at a violet, and by and by lifted my glass upon the singer, which had been in voice all the while. By this time I was practically sure of its identity. In imagination I could already see its bright yellow breast. The name was as good as down in my book, — *Helminthophila rufica-pilla*. But the glass, having no imagination, showed me a white breast with a dark line across it, — a cerulean warbler! Verily, an ear is a vain thing for safety. See your

bird, I say, and take a second look; and then go back and look again. In another tree a parula warbler was singing. About him, by good luck, I made no mistake. As for the other bird, even after I had seen his white breast, his tune — with which he was literally spilling over — continued to sound amazingly Nashvillian; though there are few warbler songs with which I should have supposed myself more thoroughly acquainted than with this same clearly characterized Nashville ditty, — a hurried measure followed by a still more hurried trill. Perhaps this particular cerulean had a note peculiarly his own. I should be glad to think so. Perhaps, on the other hand, the fault was all with the man who heard it; in which case the less said the better. In either event, my theory as to the cerulean's commonness was in a fair way to be verified. It was well I had that comfort.

Before I could get down the hill again I must stop to listen to a gnatcatcher's squeaky voice, and the next moment I saw the bird, and another with him. The second one proceeded immediately to a nest, — conspicuously displayed on an oak branch,

— while her mate hovered about, squeaking in the most affectionate manner. Then away they flew in company, and after a long absence were back again for another turn at building. They were making a joy of their labor, the male especially; but it is true he made little else of it. With him I was at once taken captive, — so happy, so proud, and so devoted. A paragon of amorous behavior, I called him; having the French idea of "assistance," no doubt, but a lover in every movement. Never was the good old-fashioned phrase "waiting upon her" more prettily illustrated. Birds are imaginative creatures, says Richard Jefferies, and I believe it; and this fellow, I am sure, had endowed his spouse with all the graces of all the birds that ever were or ever will be. In other words, he was truly in love. The nest was already shingled throughout with bits of gray lichen, laid on so skillfully that Father Time himself might have done it. That is the right way. Let the house look as if it were a growth, a something native to the spot, only less old than the ground it rests on. The gnatcatcher's nest is always a work of art. Gnatcatcher eggs could

hardly be counted upon to hatch in any other.

As I passed up the road, on my way homeward, a flock of eight nighthawks were swimming overhead. Their genius runs, not to architecture, but to grace of aerial motion. They do not shoot like the swifts, nor skim and dart like the swallows, nor circle on level wings like the hawks, but have an easy, slow-seeming, wavering, gracefully "limping" flight, which is strictly their own. At the same time two buzzards met in mid-air, one going with the breeze, the other against it. I could have told the fact, without other knowledge of the wind's course, by the different carriage of the two pairs of wings. So "the bird trims her to the gale."

Having the cerulean warbler question still upon my mind, and seeing another hardwood hill within easy reach, I turned my steps thither. Yes, I was hardly there before I heard a bird singing; but the reader may be sure I did not take my ear's word for it. This was the fourth hilltop I had visited to-day, and on every one the "rare" warbler (but it is well known to be abun-

dant in West Virginia) had been found without so much as a five-minute search.

The next thing, of course, was to find the nest, and so establish the fact of the birds' breeding. For that I had one day left; and it may be said at once that I spent the greater share of the next forenoon in the vicinity of the grapevine thicket, before mentioned, on Lincoln Heights. A male cerulean was there, — I both heard and saw him, — but no female showed herself; and when at last my patience ran out, I gave up the point for good. She had been seen in the diligent collection of building materials, and that, considered as evidence, was nearly the same as a discovery of the nest itself. With that I must be content. The comfortable way of finding birds' nests is to happen upon them. A regular hunt — a "dead set," as we call it — is apt to be a discouraging business.

My present attempt, it is true, was a quiet, inactive piece of work, little more than an idle waiting for the lady of the nest to "give herself away;" and even that was relieved by much looking at mountain prospects and frequent turns in the surround-

ing woods. Once a crossbill called and a cardinal whistled almost in the same breath, — a kind of northern and southern duet. Then a cuckoo and a dove fell to cooing on opposite sides of me; very different sounds, though in our poverty we designate them by the same word. The dove's voice is a thousand times more plaintive than the cuckoo's, and to hear it, no matter how near, might come from a mile away; as I have known the little ground dove to be "mourning" from a fig-tree at my elbow while I was endeavoring to sight it far down the field. The dove's note is the voice of the future or of the past, I am not certain which. A few rods from the spot where I had taken my station, a single deerberry bush (*Vaccinium stamineum*) was in profuse bloom, and made a really pretty show; loose sprays of white flaring blossoms all hanging downward, each with its cluster of long protruding stamens, till the bush, I thought, was like a miniature candelabrum of electric lights. As Thoreau might have said, for so homely a plant the deerberry is very handsome. Either from association or for some other reason, it wears always a certain com-

mon look. When we see an azalea shrub or even an apple-tree in bloom, we seem to see the very object of its being. The flower calls for no ulterior result, though it may have one; its fruit is in itself. But a blossoming blueberry bush, no matter of what kind, looks like a plant that was made to bear something edible, a plant whose end is use rather than beauty.

If the forenoon had been indolent, the noonday hour was more so. I descended the hill by a way different from any I had yet taken, and found myself at the foot in a public road running through a cultivated valley. The day was peculiarly comfortable, with a bright sun and a temperate breeze, — ideal weather for such inactivities as I was engaged in. Coming to an old cherry-tree, I rested awhile in its shadow. A farmhouse was not far off, with apple-trees before it, a barn across the way, and two or three men at work in the sloping ploughed field beyond. To one as lazy as I then was, it is almost a luxury to see other men hoeing or ploughing, so they be far enough off to become a part of the landscape. Near the barn stood a venerable

weeping willow, huge of girth, a very patriarch, yet still green as youth itself. Here were good farm-loving birds, a pleasant society. A pair of house wrens came at once to look at the stranger, and one of them interested me by dusting itself in the road. Two kingbirds were about the apple-trees (apple-tree flycatchers would be my name for them, if a name were in order), now sitting quiet for a brief space, now scaling the heavens, as if to see how nearly perpendicular a bird's flight could be made, and then tumbling about ecstatically with rapid vociferations, after the half-crazy manner of their kind. The kingbird is plentifully endowed not only with spirit, but with spirits. A goldfinch sang and twittered in the softest voice, and a catbird mewed. From a quince bush, a little farther off, a wild bobolinkian strain was repeated again and again, — an orchard oriole, I thought most likely. I went nearer (to the shade of a low cedar), and soon had him in sight, — a young male in yellow plumage, with a black throat-patch. The song was extremely taking, and the more I heard it, the more it seemed to have the true bobolink ring. The quince

bushes were in pale pink bloom, and the branches of a tall snowball-tree in the unfenced front yard of the house fairly drooped under their load of white globular clusters. Just opposite was a sweet-brier bush, "the pastoral eglantine," half dead like others that I had noticed here, and like the whole tribe of its New England brothers and sisters. Here as in Massachusetts a blight was upon them; they were living with difficulty. It would be good, I thought, to see the sweet-brier once where it flourishes; where the beauty of the plant matches the beauty and sweetness of the rose it bears. Can it be that it is not quite hardy even in Virginia?

My seat under the snowball-tree (to the coolness of which I had moved from under the cedar) had presently to be given up. The women of the house became aware of me, and out of a bashful regard for my own comfort I took the road again. Soon I passed a double house, with painted doors and two-sash windows! And in one of the windows were lace curtains! It was wonderful, — I was obliged to confess it, in spite of a deep-seated masculine prejudice against

all such contrivances, — it was wonderful what an air of elegance they conferred, though the paint of the doors was to be considered, of course, in the same connection.

By this time the road was approaching the slope of Buck Hill, and high noon as it was, I must run up for another half-hour among the old trees at the top, — with no special result except to disturb a summer tanager, who fired off volley after volley of objurgatory expletives, and altogether seemed to be in a terrible state of mind. His excitement was all for nothing; unless — what was likely enough — it served to give him favor in the eyes of his mate, who may be presumed to have been somewhere within hearing. Lovers, I believe, are supposed to welcome an opportunity to play the hero.

My last afternoon at the Bridge was devoted to a longish tramp into a new piece of country, where for an hour I had hopes of adding at least a name or two to my Virginia bird-list, which for twenty-four hours had been at a standstill. I came unexpectedly upon a mill, and what was of greater account, a millpond, — "a long, dirty pond," as my uncivil pencil describes it. Here were

swallows, as might have been foreseen, but the most careful scrutiny revealed nothing beyond the two species already catalogued, — the barn swallow and the rough-wing. Here, too, in an apple orchard, were a Baltimore oriole gathering straws, a phœbe, a golden warbler, and several warbling vireos, the only ones so far noticed with the exception of a single bird at Pulaski. About the border of the pond were spotted sandpipers (no solitaries, to my disappointment) and two male song sparrows. This last species I saw but twice in Virginia, — along the bushy shore of the creek at Pulaski, and here beside this millpond. Wherever the song sparrow is scarce, it is likely to be restricted to the immediate neighborhood of water. Even in Massachusetts it is pretty evident that such places are its first choice. As I sometimes say, the song sparrow likes a swamp as well as the swamp sparrow; but the species being so exceedingly abundant, there are not swampy spots enough to go round, and the majority of the birds have to shift as they can, along bushy fence-rows and in pastures and scrub-lands.

The building interested me almost as much

as the sandpipers and the sparrows. It was painted red, and served not only as a mill, but as a post-office ("Red Mills") and a "department store," with its sign, "Dry Goods, Groceries, &c." A tablet informed the passer-by that the mill had been "established" in 1798, destroyed in 1881, and reopened in 1891; and on the same tablet, or another, was the motto, "Laborare est orare." I regretted not to meet the proprietor, but he was nowhere in sight, and I felt a scruple about intruding upon the time of a man who was at once postmaster, miller, farmer, storekeeper, and scholar. With that motto before me, — "Apologia pro vita sua," he might have called it, — such an intrusion would have seemed a sacrilege.

What I remember best about the whole establishment is the song of a blue-gray gnatcatcher, to which I stopped to listen under a low savin-tree on a bluff above the mill. He was directly over my head, singing somewhat in the manner of a catbird, but I had almost to hold my breath to hear him. It was amazing that a bird's voice could be spun so fine. A mere shadow of a sound, I was ready to say. It was only by

the happiest accident that I did not miss it altogether. Then, when the fellow had finished his music, he began squeaking in that peculiarly teasing manner of his, and kept it up till I was weary. The gnatcatcher is a creature by himself, a miniature bird, wonderfully slender, with a strangely long tail, which he carries jauntily and makes the most of on all occasions. But if he only knew it, his chief claim to distinction is his singing voice. If the humming-bird's is attenuated in the same proportion (and who can assert the contrary?), he may be the finest vocalist in the world, and we none the wiser.

I was to start northward by the next noonday train, and had already laid out my forenoon's work. Before breakfast I took my last look at the famous bridge, and my last stroll through Cedar Creek ravine. I had been there every day, I think, and had always found something new. This time it was a slippery-elm-tree by the saltpetre cave. I had brought away a twig, and was sitting in my door putting a lens upon it and upon a sedum specimen, when the veranda was suddenly taken possession of by a dozen or

more of young men. They were just up from the railway station, and were deep in a discussion of ways and means, — tickets, luncheons, and time-tables. Then, in a momentary lull in the talk, I heard a quiet voice say, "Sedum." They were a company of Johns Hopkins men out upon a geological trip. So I learned at noon when we met at the railway station; and a pleasant botanical hour I had with one or two of them as we rode northward. Now, on the piazza, they did not tarry long; time was precious to them also; and as soon as they had gone down to the bridge I set off in the opposite direction. My final ramble was to be to Lincoln Heights, to see once more that magnificent avenue of trees and that beautiful mountain prospect. The cerulean warbler was singing as usual, but there was no sign of his mate, though I could not do less than to wait a little while by the grapevine thicket in a vain hope of her appearance. Here, as in the ravine, I had not yet seen everything. Straight before me stood a locust tree, every branch hung with long, fragrant white clusters. I had overlooked it completely till now. If I learned nothing else

in Virginia, I ought to have learned something about my limitations as an "observer." But I need not have traveled so far for such a purpose. Wisdom so common as that may be picked up any day in a man's own door-yard.

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